

**"AND WOMAN WILL PREVAIL OVER MAN:"
SYMBOLIC SEXUAL INVERSION AND
COUNTER-HEGEMONIC DISCOURSE
IN MT. BANAHAW**

THE CASE OF THE *CIUDAD MISTICA DE DIOS*

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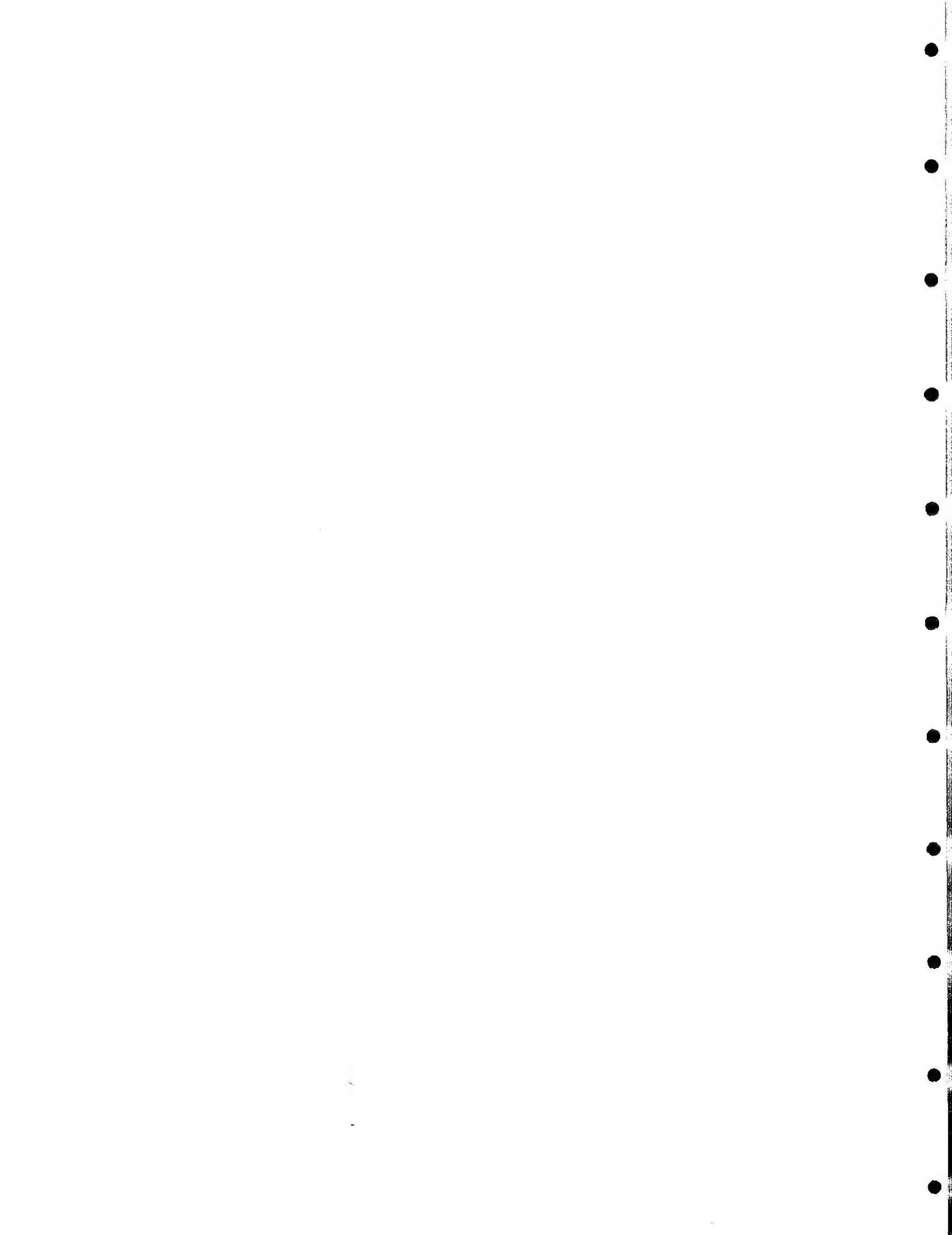


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"and woman will prevail over man:" Symbolic Sexual Inversion and Counter-hegemonic Discourse in Mt. Banahaw.¹

The Case of the *Ciudad Mistica de Dios*

by Floro C. Quibuyen

OVERVIEW

The hermeneutic approach of recent scholarship on Philippine millennial movements, valuable as it is in recovering hidden meanings, does not explain how ideas arise. It is not enough to acknowledge that ideas have historical contexts. It must be emphasized that ideas are constituted in social practice.

Thus, peasant religious discourse should be analyzed as constituting an ideological practice, involving an opposition to the dominant discourse in society. Using a Marxist critique that is informed by Derrida's deconstructionist perspective, I have attempted an analysis of the counter-discourse of the *Ciudad Mistica de Dios* (CMD, literally, the Mystical City of God) of Mt. Banahaw (Dolores town, Quezon province, Philippines).

A semiotic analysis of the CMD cosmology reveals a counter-hegemonic discourse manifested in the way power is appropriated through the inversion of symbols embedded in the dominant discourse's notions of space, time, and gender. The CMD's counter-discourse is thus a metaphysical ju-jitsu, as it were, involving the reversal of terms in the binary opposites of the dominant discourse.

Following the lead of feminist anthropologists Atkinson and Rosaldo, I have realized that the gender constructions of the peasant millennial communities I have studied are understandable within the "moral praxis" (to use Scholte's term, 1985), or the "ideological practice" (to use Tanabe and Turton's concept, 1984) of an indigenous people in their encounter with Spanish colonialism, an alien culture which introduced the sinfulness of Eve, the virginity of the Blessed Mother, and the notion

that the Filipino was inherently wretched, especially if he was poor. Spain was followed of course by America which introduced the idea that the key to salvation lay in the accumulation of capital.

In that confrontation between an indigenous culture and an alien, patriarchal cosmology, the indigenes had to struggle to save themselves. Eventually, they developed a discourse of resistance by appropriating the very ideas that were used by the hegemonic state to subjugate them. In this counter-discourse of the peasants, therefore, what we witness is the insurrection (to use a Foucauldian term) of subjugated knowledges -- an insurrection of local knowledge that at least during the Spanish period, and before the Americans came, constituted a moral praxis of liberation.

The opposition between time/space dimensions--inside (*loob*) and outside (*labas*) -- in the millennial cosmology of the CMD may well be a "reference myth" (a Levi-Straussian concept) for all peasant movements, whether religious like the CMD, the *Tres Persona(s) Solo Dios* (Three Persons in One God), the *Cofradia de San Jose*, etc., or secular like the *Katipunan*, *Sakdal*, the *Hukbalahap*, (acronym for Hukbong Bayan Laban sa Hapon, or the People's Army Against the Japanese) etc. Such opposition corresponds to Victor Turner's notion of structure and anti-structure, where structure may refer to being inside society and history, and anti-structure as being outside of society and history, a condition characterized by *communitas*, in which asymmetrical relations of power, self-interest, individualism, competitiveness, antagonism, domination by one group or class or sex over another are nullified and replaced by an existential condition of solidarity, a community of brothers and sisters sharing an "economy of abundance" (a phrase used by Irigaray, 1985).

Thus, the Banahaw mythico-religious complex constitutes a counter-hegemonic tradition which started as a form of resistance to the Spanish colonial regime. But then, after its brutal suppression and defeat, it became an alternative community (fragile as it is) within a social order that was perceived by its predominantly rural constituents as

immoral and unjust. This thwarted social movement, however, could become an alternative community and sustain itself only by being outside of what Marx and Durkheim call "civil society," a society characterized by domination. For the millennial folk, thus, "being outside" of structures of domination was realized both in a real physical sense and symbolically as a demarcated, sacred, indeed mystical space -- the venerated New Jerusalem was at the same time a geographically isolated place of refuge.

Through the backdrop of history, therefore, we witness the genesis of Mt. Banahaw as a millenarian sanctuary and pilgrimage center where a counter-discourse negates the power structure underlying mainstream Philippine culture and at the same time affirms the *Sagrada Familia* (Holy Family) as constituting the principle of a moral order in which men and women are not viewed as separate and antagonistic sexes but as both the genderless *Anak* (children) of the *Ama* (Father) and *Ina* (Mother). In the myth of the *Sagrada Familia*, the *Ama* and *Ina* are not merely equal, they are identical. Translating the myth in cultural terms, therefore, woman is either an *Ina* or an *Anak*, and man is either an *Ama* or an *Anak*. These three ideal types, to use Weber's term -- constitute an indissoluble bond, a unity of three identical, as it were, personages, sharing and constituting one power -- a principle embodied in the myth of the *Sagrada Familia* as the Trinity.*

* This preliminary study would not have been possible without the openness and generosity of the millennial folk of Mt. Banahaw -- I owe them my deepest gratitude.

Through my contacts with the members of the *Ciudad Mistica de Dios* and the *Tres Persona Solo Dios*, I began to get a glimpse of our rural folks' consciousness: their understanding of our nation's struggle for independence and of our continuing quest for national identity. It then dawned on me that I was not just taking field notes or shooting a film: I was in fact coming to anthropology, to use Stephen Tyler's expression, "as the start of a different kind of journey." To do research or to write an ethnography, I have come to realize, is to bear witness to this different kind of journey -- a rediscovery of my roots.

Part I

A. Setting and Historical Background

On the foothills of a slumbering volcano is a town called Dolores, in the Province of Quezon, in the Southern Luzon region of the Philippines. Dolores is like any rural town in Southern Luzon and Mt. Banahaw is like any other mountain -- verdant with foliage and towering centuries-old trees, nourished by its seemingly inexhaustible waterfalls, springs, and streams. Like most of the peasants inhabiting the more elevated regions of Southern Luzon, the inhabitants of Dolores are laborers in vast coconut plantations owned by the traditional elite most of whom have chosen to live in the plush suburbs of Metro Manila. But there is a place in Dolores that is different -- the *Santong Lugar* (literally, the Sacred Place) or the New Jerusalem, cradled by the barrios of Sta. Lucia and *Kinabuhayan* (Place of Resurrection), is the spiritual center of practically all of the 200 or so cults throughout the archipelago.

In Dolores town, at the foothills of Mt. Banahaw, are nestled some 30 cults which venerate the mountain as sacred, where God, the Catholic saints, and the heroes of the 19th-century Philippine nationalist movement are believed to dwell. The most influential cults in the area are the *Suprema de la Iglesia del Ciudad Mistica de Dios* (translated as Supreme Church of the Mystical City of God by its members) of Sta. Lucia and the *Tres Persona Solo Dios* of *Kinabuhayan*. The members of these cults are not original inhabitants of Dolores -- they are mostly peasants who hail from the surrounding towns and provinces, and some are the urban poor from depressed areas of Manila. They have all gathered here to escape the oppressive conditions elsewhere and seek refuge within the mountain's protective and healing bosom to await the expected Apocalypse in the year 2000. This final reckoning, they believe, will usher a world utterly transformed into a community of justice and love -- a vision that engenders a *comunitas* life among the believers sustained by the rituals of pilgrimage and penitence.

The historical process that transformed Mt. Banahaw into a pilgrimage center and millenarian sanctuary dates back to the waning days of the Spanish colonial era. The 1830s saw "the first coordinated religious rebellion in Philippine history" (Sturtevant, 1976:82) which was instigated by a devout young *provinciano* [man from the province] named Apolinario de la Cruz (popularly known as Hermano Pule) whose *communitas* brotherhood, *Cofradia de San Jose* became, in 1841, according to Setsuho Ikehata, a "communitas movement" against the established order. As is the fate of all millenarian movements that rise in revolt, the Cofradia was brutally suppressed in the "bloodbath of Aritao" in 1841. Summarizing her research on the Cofradia, Ikehata writes:

I would like to tentatively conclude that the beliefs and religious practices of the Cofradia de San Jose were a mixture of the folk Catholicism in Lukban area as illustrated in the belief in a sacred mountain, the creation of their own place of worship, the founder's family as the basic structure of the organization with the *Punong Ina* [head mother] having an important role and the partaking of a fruit of a tree as the symbolic Eucharist; an orthodox Catholicism, as in the strong devotion to the Virgin Mary, the observance of the Christian calendar, the recognition of church authorities, and the utilization of Christian paraphernalia like rosaries, prayers, novenas, etc., especially the celebration of Thanksgiving mass on the nineteenth of every month....(1983:8).

Ikehata does not discuss pilgrimage except for a passing remark that "another interesting point is that the pilgrimage to Mt. Banahaw seemed to be already practised by the people. I am referring to the pilgrimage...conducted by the Cofradia during the Lent of 1834." (Ikehata,1983:8) This is central to the Cofradia. The importance of pilgrimage to the Cofradia is noted by Sturtevant, a point whose theoretical import he did not pursue. Sturtevant writes:

Survivors of the bloodbath at Alitao continued to be defiant. Abandoning the villages and lowlands to their Iberian and mestizo overlords, they scaled Mt. San Cristobal and its imposing neighbor Banahaw. The slumbering volcanoes exercised a dual attraction over Apolinario's former disciples. Settings for pre-Spanish religious rites [underscoring mine], the awe-inspiring slopes also reminded the refugees of Christianity's fabled shrines. Draped with brooks and

waterfalls, honeycombed with caves, and covered by lush vegetation, the mountains became a 'Holy Land' for the devotees of San Jose. Precipices, grottoes and streams received appropriate titles. Caverns were named in honor of the 'Trinity' and the 'Saints'. A crystalline creek was classified the 'River Jordon,' a vermillion-tinged spring was designated 'Blood of Christ,' and an opaque pool was labelled 'Milk of the Virgin.' Freed from their friar surveillance, the exiles fashioned a spiritual milieu perfectly attuned to village aspirations. San Cristobal and Banahao, consequently, became the destinations for regular pilgrimages from the sullen lowlands" (1976:82) [underscoring mine].

The massacre of the Cofradia did not wipe out millenarianism. In 1870, a new Cofradia was discovered by the Spanish authorities (which they subsequently raided) named "Cofradia of San Jose, San Apolinario, and San Apolonio" -- after the rumored apotheoses of Apolinario de la Cruz, who was executed after the Aritao bloodbath, and his disciple Apolonio Purgatorio, who died in the massacre, and their appearance with the Virgin Mary to several persons, notably one Januario Labios who became the new leader. (Ileto, 1979:80-81)

It was Labios who continued the apocalyptic vision of Hermando Pule. He prophesied the coming of a great storm and deluge:

...homes and buildings would be destroyed; rivers and streams will overflow their banks. In order to prevent the inundation of their fields and the destruction of their homes, they must deepen the beds of streams and fortify their houses with two posts, in the form of a cross... they must make the pilgrimage into the mountains [underscoring mine] and there undergo 'penitence,' which would mark their initial separation from or dying to the world that would be destroyed when the cataclysm finally occurs. And they must form the brotherhood that would herald the kind of relations between man and man that the society of the future would bring.... They also disavowed any connections with the priests of the Catholic Church, for the Church they claimed was in the mountain" [underscoring mine]. (Ileto, 1979:84-85)

A raid by the Spanish authorities was made which "cut down sacred trees and attempted to destroy the sacred rock which formed part of the cult." (Ileto, 1979:85) Again, this did not wipe out millenarianism.

During the armed uprising against Spain in 1896, the Cofradia, based on Mt. San Cristobal, underwent a rigorous expansion, attracting many followers, predominantly peasants, under the leadership of Sebastian Caneo who was "primarily responsible for

interpreting separation from Spain as a sign that the world was about to undergo a substantive change, for which his brotherhood must prepare through prayer and participation in the struggle." (Ileto,1979:93) By mid-1897, the cult center of Mt. San Cristobal had been transformed into a patriotic shrine: "Martyrs like Fr. Jose Burgos and Jose Rizal were said to be living there, apparently to render prophetic advice to pilgrims." (Ileto,1979:96) By the time the revolution against Spain began in 1896, the mountain was an established center for the Lenten pilgrimage, attracting not only Tagalogs but people from all over the archipelago. (Ileto,1979:86)

In 1935, the rebel-turned-pacifist fugitive, Agapito Ilustrisimo, who fought in the *Pulahanes* (the Red Ones) peasant revolt against the newly-installed American regime in the Visayas region in the early 1920s, founded the *Tres Persona(s) Solo Dios* near a spring on the slopes of Mt. Banahaw. (Marasigan,1985:7-8) Claiming to have followed the command of *Santong Voces* (Holy Voice) to found a new sect in the mountain and through his miraculous powers of healing, he attracted a following. The settlers then christened the place *Kinabuhayan* which eventually became a chartered barrio in the town of Dolores, Quezon Province. The spring near the church became, subsequently, the most sacred shrine in the mountain.

By the late 1950s, with the entry of the *Ciudad Mistica de Dios* (through the efforts of Amador Suarez, former bandit turned charismatic messiah and a disciple of Maria Bernarda Balitaan, the cult's founder), Mt. Banahaw became a full blown pilgrimage center -- "the New Jerusalem" -- a metaphor that signifies a way of life and a way of perceiving the world that is oriented to the Passion of Christ, expressed through the rituals of pilgrimage, a symbolic ritual that dates back to the *communitas* days of Hermano Pule.

B. General Characteristics

Oosterwal (1968:45-46) notes a total of some 268 cults throughout the Philippines. Mt. Banahaw is the sanctuary of about 30 millenarian cults, of which *Tres Personas Solo Dios* (TPSD) is the oldest and the *Suprema de la Iglesia del Ciudad Mistica de Dios* (CMD) is the largest. The latter, according to one researcher, Rene Somera (1986:437), "holds the richest religious tradition in the area" and is thereby considered "the gatekeeper of the *Santong Lugar* tradition. Somera writes, "Perhaps what serves as the binding spirit for all the different religious groups in the area is the mountain itself, considered sacrosanct by all. Though largely divergent in their systems of homage and belief, the various religious sects in the place all regard Mt. Banahaw -- 'the holy mountain' -- as the common denominator in their religious worship." (Somera, 1986:437)

The millenarian groups in Mt. Banahaw, especially the CMD and the TPSD, share four basic characteristics:

- 1) The ritual of pilgrimage which exhibits the root paradigm of the *via crucis* (way of the cross) characteristic of all Christian pilgrimages (Turner and Turner, 1978:6,10);
- 2) The spiritual pre-eminence of women over men (this seems to be a reaction against the Christian religion in two ways: i) as a counterfoil to the dominance of the male Christian ecclesiastical authority, and ii) as a return to pre-Spanish practices;
- 3) A definite timetable for the coming millennium, e.g., for the CMD, it is--
 - 1986 -- start of the disruption of social life
 - 1995 -- intensification of chaos into the final reckoning
 - 2000 -- redemption. Mt. Banahaw will open and from its mouth will emerge the golden flag, the golden church, and the golden palace (symbols for nation, church, and state);
- 4) Syncretism, fusion of pre-Spanish animism, Roman Catholicism, and mystical nationalism (Turner, 1974:224) as manifested in the following features: the veneration

of Dr. Jose Rizal, the Philippines' foremost national hero, as the "Tagalog Christ"; the veneration of the Filipino heroes as Filipino Apostles; the incorporation of Catholic-Protestant elements in the CMD's and the TPSD's liturgy and rituals; the use of nationalist elements and symbols such as flag raising and the use of the Philippine flag in ceremonial costumes; the celebration of heroes' births and deaths; the threefold devotion to Dios (God), *Kapwa* (fellow human), and *Bayan* (nation); an animistic rendering of Christian nationalistic sentiments such as the veneration of natural formations (rocks, caves, streams, waterfalls) as embodying the spirits of saints and heroes.

C. Ethnography

In 1976, I was privileged to join the field trip to Mt. Banahaw, led by Dr. Prospero Covar of the University of the Philippines. It was from that first encounter and subsequent occasional visits (the last of which was in 1986) that I write my preliminary ethnography. My account will focus on the *Ciudad Mistica de Dios*' symbolic system -- the beliefs and the rituals that constitute their world-view, based on my interviews with key informants, notably, *Mamay* (Grandfather) Amador Suarez; his daughter, *Suprema* Isabel whom he was advisor to and who was the chief priestess of the CMD; and Consuelo Mendoza, the general secretary of the CMD.

The three cultural traditions that inform the cosmology of the CMD -- indigenous (pre-Spanish) animism, Christianity (19th century Spanish Catholicism), and turn-of-the-century Filipino nationalism -- are unified by the Christian millennial theme that conceives of human history as the unfolding process by which God realizes his redemptive plan.

As Consuelo Mendoza, pointing to the altar, puts it: "In the three books hidden in a cabinet in the altar in Paradise are written all that has happened, is happening and will happen. History is pre-ordained." (1980)

History, thus, begins with the Fall and culminates in Redemption, an arduous hegira from estrangement to reunion with God. The CMD interprets this Christian motif in nativistic idiom: the work of Jesus is not the fulfillment but a necessary stage to the final realization of the Divine Plan; the final stage will be through a Filipino saviour -- a woman -- and the final drama will take place at Mt. Banahaw. For this reason, this mountain is "The New Jerusalem," "The New Heaven and Earth."

There is an original Jerusalem,' Suprema Isabel Suarez explains: The setting of Christ's passion, until now, is, of course, still in its geographical place. Now, here in our country, the place that mirrors the original Jerusalem is this mountain. And in this place there are shrines named after saints whom our devotees visit to pray and perform acts of penitence before, in obedience to "the Holy Voice" that has commanded that these spots are places of worship. The mountain is a mirror. (1986)

In the CMD eschatology, the unfinished work of Jesus Christ had to be continued by Dr. Jose Rizal and by "the twelve lights" of the Philippines (heroes of the 19th century nationalist movement). Their work, in turn, would be brought to fulfillment by a woman, Maria Bernarda Balitaan (the deceased founder of the CMD). Rizal and Balitaan had sprung from the same Divine Source and their combined labors will bring history to a close -- whereupon humanity will be reunited with the Creator. This belief is celebrated in one of their hymns:

The Virgin Maria Bernarda, a Filipina mother
Dr. Jose Rizal, a Filipino father
Once in a mystery, they came together
And so emerged this country, the Philippines.

In the millennial vision of the CMD, the Filipinos are a chosen people and the Philippines is the Promised Land. One of CMD's hymns expresses this:

Philippines, Philippines, so very small
 Among other nations, oppressed
 The hour will come, the day will come
 When those beneath shall rise and overcome.

In the world-view of the CMD, the time of Jesus and Rizal, that is, the time of men, is past. Now is the time of women, heralded by Maria Bernarda, when women will lead men in this Dawn of Redemption. Thus the priestesses -- and not priests.

Corollary to the CMD's eschatological vision is the view of the three phases of moral development, which correspond to the three aspects of the mystical church in CMD theology. The first, Iglesia Penitente, (Penitent Church) which has a meaning surprisingly akin to that of St. Augustine's "City of Man": the social world came about because of the Fall -- thereby becoming vulnerable to the workings of the Devil. Everyone starts life going through this phase which he transcends only when he becomes repentant. But asking for forgiveness is just the first stage. One must, furthermore, endeavor to master the limitation inherent in one's separation from God. This he achieves if he goes through the second phase, the Iglesia Militante (Militant Church) -- a period characterized by the militant and unwavering struggle against all evil. This involves voluntarily undergoing the necessary sacrifice, in the manner of the Passion of Christ. And, according to Mamay, "when you succeed in this struggle and master yourself so as to become steadfast in your submission to God's will, then, and only then, will you enter the Ciudad Mistica, the mystic "City of God." (Notice again how this echoes St. Augustine's "City of God." I find this curious because nowhere in my dealings with the CMD had St. Augustine been mentioned.)

The world-view of the Ciudad Mistica, thus, contains an individual and a historical perspective, both of which are expressed in its rituals and practices, taking place either within the church's premises or in the holy shrines of Mt. Banahaw.

Rituals

The CMD shares many elements of the Catholic liturgy, in its celebration of the holy mass and the observance of the sacraments of baptism, confirmation, holy orders and matrimony. However, a striking contrast is that the rituals at Mt. Banahaw are performed by priestesses, as opposed to priests. This is consistent with the cult's belief that women are the proper leaders in spiritual matters.

The syncretic blend of nationalist symbols and animistic beliefs are evident in the following rituals:

1. Holy Mass, Prayers, and Chants -- though these are derived from Catholic liturgy, they have been considerably modified to express nationalist sentiments such as the longing for national peace and unity and the liberation of the Philippines from oppression. One of the refrains of a CMD song goes:

Come on brothers and sisters,

Let us proudly wave the banner of our beloved nation.

2. Flag-raising ceremony (*Pagtataas ng Watawat*) -- this ceremony is accompanied by hymns and prayers and is attended by a large congregation, with all the priestesses and ecclesiastical hierarchy, to commemorate the birth and death anniversaries of the heroes of the nineteenth century nationalist movement against Spanish rule. These heroes are the venerated saints of the CMD. The anniversaries correspond to the feast days of the Catholic saints. Among the more important ones is the death anniversary of Jose Rizal -- December 30th. The Catholic Holy Week is also observed and a pilgrimage is made to the mountain.

3. Pilgrimage -- regular visits to the Holy Shrines. Devotees pray before natural formations such as rocks, streams, caves, waterfalls, and springs. These formations are venerated sacred altars and lighted candles and flowers are placed on them as offerings. Shrines are believed to embody the spirits of saints and heroes. There is, for example, a waterfall called *Santa Lucia* (St. Lucia) and *Ang Balon ni Santo Jacob* (Jacob's Well).

The major shrines are the ones believed to be the mystical equivalent of the sites in Jerusalem: some examples are *Kalbaryo* (Calvary) and *Kinabuhayan* (Resurrection).

The pilgrimages start at Sta. Lucia Falls and end at a wellspring called *Kinabuhayan*. Between these sites are various shrines scattered at the foothills -- a spring shrine called *Inang Santissima* (Very Holy Mother), a stream running down the mountain called *Ang Ilog Jordan* (River Jordan) which originates from *Kinabuhayan*. The latter is regarded as the most holy -- having a high potency in the healing and cleansing of the spirit. Looking down into the crystalline waters, one sees a footprint on the bedrock. This is venerated as that of Jesus Christ.

When this pilgrimage is completed, one may take the second, more difficult pilgrimage to the peak of the mountain (7000 feet) where the *Kuweba ng Ama* (Cave of the Father) is situated. From here, one goes down to the mouth of the crater (Mt. Banahaw is an extinct volcano) called *Paraiso* (Paradise) to pay homage to two adjacent waterfalls, one red and the other white (botanists who visited the area say that the coloring is due to the algae on the rocks). These two waterfalls are venerated as the "Blood of the Mother" and the "Milk of the Mother" respectively. The whole mountain is a sacred symbol for "God the Mother" who became incarnate in Maria Bernarda Balitaan. In the CMD theology, the mystery of the Trinity is the Holy Family (*Sagrada Familia*) of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Mother.

4. Bathing in the sacred falls and streams. The meaning of this practice is vividly evoked in one devotee's (*Sister Auring*) response when asked why she was bathing (quoted verbatim in mixed English and Tagalog): "*Pag naliligo kayo, mayroong bagong nafi-feel* (when you bathe, you feel something new), *after you bathe...lightness of the mind, of the heart, of your whole being. You are happy, masarap kumain* (...you eat more heartily), *walang problema* (your problems vanish), *Yun ang karanasan ng lahat ng naliligo rito* (that is the experience of all who bathe here). Usually the bath is a form of *panata*, a ritual practice to thank God for prayers answered or to ask for

special favors, not for oneself but on behalf of others -- like a relative's recovery from a dreaded terminal disease or a friend's success in an examination.

5. *Suplina* (flagellation). This ritual of whipping one's bare back is practised primarily by priestesses although lay adolescents, men and women occasionally participate. It is performed at dusk (at about 6 pm) on Tuesdays and Fridays throughout the year. It lasts for about three hours. The flagellant has to fast the day before (subsisting only on water) "to cleanse her spirit" and prepare her for the ordeal. The flagellation is done using a whip of bronze barbs soaked in a mixture of vinegar and salt. This ritual is accompanied by prayers and hymns by a congregation that kneels behind the flagellants. Usually the ritual takes place outside the CMD chapel. On certain occasions, it is performed inside the chapel before the altar during the celebration of the Holy Mass. When Consuelo Mendoza was asked why, she replied,

This is our way of fighting flesh, of inhibiting the body from intimate interaction with this world. More importantly, it is an appeal for forgiveness made on behalf of mankind -- for the end is near.

Certain features stand out in the CMD's symbolic world:

1. Affirmation of Christian beatitudes as symbols of power. Meekness in the face of evil, self abnegation and sacrifice, patience, and perseverance in suffering are all symbols of power. They are the virtues that enable a person to achieve inner strength and potency. This belief underlies the priestesses' propensity to minister to others -- whether laity or outsiders visiting Mt. Banahaw. One thing that remains etched on my mind was the time my students and I visited the CMD -- to our surprise, the priestesses cooked for us and served us dinner, for free! Another occasion I will never forget was, when climbing a steep slope, I had difficulty carrying my load of camera equipment. The priestess who was my guide and who was much younger than me, simply took my load and carried it all the way to *Kalbaryo* -- and barefoot, at that! Upon our departures, whenever we asked how much we owed them and offered them cash, the priestesses

vehemently refused to accept anything. I remarked to one priestess that this is the reverse of what I had observed of Catholic priests. The priestess replied with a smile, "Here in the CMD, 'the higher is the lower.'"

The image of the meek Christ washing the feet of his disciples is taken to heart by the priestesses. Through such Christ-like demeanor, they believe, does one gain spiritual power. Interestingly, their notion of power is similar to the Polynesian concept of *mana* as denoting efficacy, that is, the power to heal, to generate growth and abundance in the environment and to control natural and social catastrophes. But beyond *mana*, the CMD's concept of *kapangyarihan ng loob* (inner spiritual power) means the ability to generate joy and happiness in others, simply by one's presence.

2. Animistic interpretation of the "sacred" and the "profane." In the CMD world-view, the natural is sacred, the unnatural, profane. The natural is defined as that which is not created by man, e.g., whatever comes from God, who is the creator of all things. They do not make the natural-supernatural binary opposition that is common to the modern secular world. Indeed, the natural is "supernatural" in the sense of being imbued with *kapangyarihan* (spiritual power). Their concept of the profane, that is, of the unnatural, is that which is opposed to God -- acts of greed, violence, and selfishness.

3. The negation of money. One important item for the economic anthropologist is that, in the CMD, money symbolizes the ungodly qualities of greed and selfishness. Though the priestesses provide the collective labor in a communal economic enterprise involving the raising of orchids and other ornamental plants which are sold in the city and also the manufacture of children's clothes for export, there is no capital accumulation. Profit is used for the sustenance of the whole CMD community.

In the administration of sacraments, the CMD does not exact fees. No dues are required of the members. Nor, as already noted, is money accepted from visitors. Whatever gifts they receive -- and these must be in kind, preferably food -- are placed in a common fund, from which anyone in the community may draw equally with

everyone else, from the "lowliest" member to the "highest" leader. Little wonder then that the CMD draws converts mostly from the peasants and urban poor (which comprise about 90% of the Philippine population). The fetishism of money that Marx observed in capitalist society is, thus, a symbol of evil.

4. Nationalism. The vigor and intensity of the nationalist sentiment in the CMD is eloquently articulated by *Ate* (older sister) Gloria, daughter of *Mamay* (grandfather) Amador Suarez who was a priestess in her younger days. Since her marriage, she retired from priesthood (for one must be a virgin to be a priestess) and, while raising five children, became active in the barrio council of the local village government, first as a councilor and later as a barrio captain (village chief). The following are excerpts from my interview with her:

Dahil dalawa ang umalipin sa atin eh: kasalanan at ibang bansa. Kung hindi naman tayo pinasok ng ibang bansa, hindi naman siguro ganito kagulo o hindi naman...kung ano na itong kinasapitan ng ating bansa.

(Because two forces have enslaved us: sin and other countries. If we had not been dominated by another country, our life would not be this, perhaps not this chaotic, or else I don't think our nation would have been in this situation.

Hindi malaya ang bansang Pilipinas! Iyan, noong baguhin ni Ferdinand Marcos ang Independence Day, ginawa niyang June 12, nagkaroon kami ng parang by district na selebrasyon. Kaunaunahan naming pagseselebreyt ng June 12 dito sa Dolores, ako'y baranggay council pa noon. Hindi ako pumayag, kahit nagdeklara na si Marcos, Martial Law pa noon. Sabi pa nga sa akin noong supervisor namin, "Konsehala, hindi ka mag-alala baka may 'sniper' diyan na masabi kay Marcos na ayaw..." At bakit ako matatakot? Di gusto ko ngang makaharap siya at sabihin ko sa kanyang mali ang kanyang ginawa. Paano niyang masasabi na ang independence day ay June 12? Pagkatapos isinigaw ni Emilio Aguinaldo ang kalayaan sa Kawit, Cavite, ilan pa ang naging kabilangan ng madugong himagsikan? Pagkatapos ng 1898, sinakop pa tayo ng mga Amerikano, sinakop din ng mga Hapon.

(The Filipino nation is not free! Like, when Ferdinand Marcos changed our Independence Day to June 12, each district in the region had to celebrate. It was the first time we celebrated June 12 in Dolores. I was then a member of the barrio council. I didn't agree, even if Marcos had made the decree. It was martial law then and my supervisor said, 'Councilor, a 'sniper' might report you to Marcos, aren't you afraid?' And why should I be afraid? So much the better if I can confront Marcos and tell him that what he did was wrong. How can he say that June 12 is

Independence Day? After Emilio Aguinaldo declared independence in Kawit, Cavite, how many more bloody wars did we have? After 1898, we were invaded by the Americans, then occupied by the Japanese.)

At saka pa, paano mo masasabing malaya ang bansang Pilipinas? Ang ibang bansa sa daigdig kaya nagiging maunlad ay dahil sa sinisikap nilang ang kasarinlan ay siyang pagyamanin. Bakit marami sa estudyante ang lumalagpak? Panay salitang banyaga ang itinuturo, panay hindi nauunawaan halos.

(Moreover, how can you say that the Filipino nation is free? Other countries in the world progress because they endeavor to nurture their identity. Look, why is it that many of our students flunk? They are taught in a foreign tongue, which they almost don't understand.)

Bakit, naibalik бага ng kalayaan ang kasarinlan ng Pilipinas? Magmula sa kultura, sa tradisyon, at sa lahat na? Hindi! Kaya noong ipasok sa MEC ang tinatawag na "continuous progression" ipinakipaglaban ko sa supervisor namin. President kasi ako ng PTA eh. Continuous progression, ano ang nangyari sa mga eskuwela? Inutil-- nag-graduate ng grade 6 ni hindi makapagcompose ng composition. Yung anak ko naggraduate ng grade 6 pagdating sa high school ako ang naggagawa ng composition. Hindi nila kaya mag-Ingles.

Aba, sisimulan ng Tagalog sa grade one, pagdating ng grade 5 saka papasukan ng kaunting Ingles. Pagdating ng high school automatico, Ingles ng lahat. Aba'y simulan niyo kako ng pagtatagalog doon sa mga universidad pababa. Yang lahat ng aklat sa pamantasan yan ang baguhin ninyo. Anong maituturo ng paaralan? Naituturo ng paaralan matutong bumasa ng Ingles? Ay, hindi sapat 'yan. Kaya, maraming eskuwela, mahihirap na tao ang nagsisikap mag-aral, salitang banyaga pa rin ang itinuturo sa kanila sa paaralan. Kaya walang umunlad. Halos hindi maintindihan ng mga bata, eh. Bakit ang bansang Hapon -- pumunta ka nga sa Japan, narinig mo bang itinuro doon ang Pilipino, narinig mo bang itinuro doon ang Ingles, and Koreano, Vietnamese o ano? Hindi! Sariling salita nila kaya kahit batang maliit marunong gumawa ng laruan. Ay ang Pilipinas mo, mga kabataan babagong patutungtong sa Maynila, hahanapin "stateside." Ay, mas matibay 'yong coco na niyari sa Pilipinas, walang delikadong almirulan, plantsahin, maginhawa pa sa katawan.

Anong kasarinlan ang masasabi mong nasa Pilipinas na ultimong sariling wika tinatalikdan halos. Mayroon kang makaka-usap, dadating sa bukid mga social workers, i-inglisin pa kami. Ay, susmaryosep! Ay hindi naman kami marunong mag-Ingles. (1980)

(Why, has independence brought back our identity? Starting with our culture, our tradition, everything? That's why when I was the PTA president in my son's school, I fought with our supervisor on the issue of continuous progression scheme of the Ministry of Education and Culture -- where gradeschoolers are started in Tagalog, then when they reach grade 5, a little English, and finally in high school, automatically everything is in English. What happens to our children? They don't learn anything. My child graduated from grade 6 without knowing how to write an essay. When he reached high school, I had to write his compositions for him. These children don't know how to write in English. Look here, I said, start with Tagalog from the university downwards. All the books in the university, these must be changed.

Otherwise, what can the school teach -- how to read in English? That's not the solution. That's why in many schools, the poor aspire to learn, unfortunately they are taught in a foreign language. Thus, no one learns. The children could hardly understand their lessons. Take the case of Japan -- when you go there will you see Japanese kids being taught in Pilipino, or in English, or Korean, or Vietnamese, or whatever? No! They use their own language, that's why even little kids are intelligent enough to make their own toys. Unlike in the Philippines, children prefer imported toys -- which are expensive, even if just made of plastic. Ay, my country, the first thing these children look for when they go to Manila are the imported clothes -- 'stateside.' Ay, the ones made here are of better quality, more durable and comfortable.

What independence are you talking about when we disown our native tongue? Social workers come here to the countryside, and they talk to us in English. Ay, *susmaryosep* (Jesus, Mary, Joseph)! We, the rural folk are not English speaking.)

On a more religious note, the rejection by the CMD of what is alien to the native culture was strongly expressed by Mamay in a talk he gave on the occasion of Rizal's death anniversary (December 30, 1978). He said:

If in our country today, foreign ways exert a predominant influence, especially on matters of faith, it is because the Filipino people have given up their own critical faculties in favor of the more comfortable expedient of simply doing what they are told. That is why, up to now, the erroneous ways of the foreigner still dominate our mentality.

He goes on:

The worship of God should not be mediated by foreign saints. Never! They may have been individuals of virtue in their respective countries but all you men and women who are gathered here, if you attain an exemplary and virtuous life by steadfastly following a morally upright path to God, you, too, can be saints.

Then he says:

...but this is a school of faith. Unlike those churches or sects that commercialize God, wherein every activity or interaction involves money. Is there such a God who, being perpetually dependent on alms from the poor, is worse off than the beggar?

We are all bound to each other as siblings committed to our duty to support those, because of poverty, are finding it hard to survive. We have to stand by them.

This is God's law -- that we should love and care for one another like true brothers and sisters, who, as it were, came from only one source, from only one mother.

The emphasis on *pagkaka-isa* (unity) for the Filipino nation is foremost in the aspirations of the CMD. Addressing a group of students from the University of the Philippines, who presented in May 22, 1981 a cultural show of Rizal's novels and poems for the CMD community, Mamay made these remarks:

I rejoice firstly to God who truly is the author of this show. You were not the ones who created it, you were used as God's instruments to make known His message, by using your talents as His medium. Thanks to God that, through you, He has imparted in us the spirit of love for our people. Most especially, through your show, He has awakened us from our lethargy, to invigorate us with hope. I am grateful that God has extended my life that I may see your presentation (Mamay died a month later at the age of 97). I hope and I pray that you will stay together, continue in your mission to promote the national unity that you wish to realize. Care for our nation deeply and also for yourselves. May your cause prosper.

Underlying this appeal for unity is the longing for a lost ancient Filipino community -- a community shattered by alien rule. This longing confirms the CMD's eager wait for the promised millennium, when the Filipino nation and the rest of the world shall have been united in peace, justice, freedom, and prosperity under the all-loving rule of the one and true Divine Power. For the *Ciudad Mistica de Dios*, this is a consummation devoutly to be wished.

Part II

Recent Studies on the Banahaw Tradition

The longing for a lost Eden is a common theme that runs through all Philippine millenarian movements. The *Lapiang Malaya* (Free Party) massacre in 1967 stimulated scholarly interest on the Philippine millenarian tradition.² This triggered a Weberian style of scholarship that invigorated Philippine social science research. Scholars who belong to this school are: Covar, Sturtevant, Ileto, Shoesmith, Love, and Alaras.

It was Sturtevant (1969, 1976) who first made a comprehensive study of the millenarian tradition using the perspectives of Wallace and Robert Redfield. This was followed by Ileto (1975, 1979), using the more recent interpretative framework -- a seminal work that inspired subsequent research, notably that of Love and Alaras.

Both Sturtevant and Ileto start with 1840, with Sturtevant ending in 1940 and Ileto in 1910. It is interesting to note that both find the LM incident in 1967 as central to their work -- Sturtevant ends his book with an epilogue of the incident, while Ileto begins his with an introduction of the incident. For both Sturtevant and Ileto, therefore, the tradition which dates back to 1840 is a continuing one. Covar (1975) adheres to this perspective as does Shoesmith (1978). Both see the same tradition in contemporary millenarian cults spread throughout the archipelago -- from Luzon to Mindanao. Love (1977) in fact sees that tradition in his study of a contemporary *samahan* (fellowship). Alaras (1988) applies this notion of a continuous tradition to all contemporary *kapatiran* (brotherhood), defining at the same time the content of this tradition -- as the *Tipan ng Mahal na Ina* (the Covenant of the Blessed Mother) whose spiritual center is Mt. Banahaw.

Thus all agree that a continuing tradition can be read from the 1840s to the 1980s, a tradition of resistance to the prevailing power structure in Philippine society and an alternative vision of the moral order. Indeed, the contemporary ones, as do their 19th

century predecessors, not only have manifested violent reactions to established authority, but also have set up alternative communities.

Shoesmith writes:

The recurrent phenomenon of the folk religious movement and its wide distribution suggest that it appeals to enduring values in Philippine folk culture; that, in at least a general sense, it expresses enduring views about society which are both religious and ideological. (153)

Shoesmith cites the "obvious similarities":

The use of *anting-antings* or magical charms; the belief that revolutionary heroes will reappear to usher in the millennium; the belief that prayer and magical objects will protect the believer from bullets; the careful passing on of *oraciones* and *Gozos* from old novenas, and other prayers in a rich oral tradition; recurrent symbols such as the triangle surmounted on the eye of God: these are all evidence that there is a remarkable continuity in the imagery, ritual and underlying ideas and values of Philippine folk religious movements. (154)

Covar likewise (1975), in his research on contemporary local and autochthonous religious organizations in the Philippines identified a religious symbolism similar to earlier Rizalian movements. The Rizalian movement of the 1970s, observes Shoesmith, shares much of its organizational character and its beliefs and religious practices with the *colorums* of the 1920s and it can be assumed that the missionary activity of the Rizalista sects in the south in the 1960s appealed to traditions which derived from the same sources, reviving rather than creating a religious culture passed on from generation to generation. (1978:154)

Shoesmith writes,

Their worship of the heroes of the 1896 revolution, including Apolinario Mabini and Andres Bonifacio as well as Rizal, and of earlier figures such as the Filipino priest-martyrs, Fathers Burgos, Gomes and Zamora, show that Rizalians themselves are aware of the continuity between their movement and those of the past. Indeed, they display a preoccupation with the past as a stage in their pilgrimage towards a 'New Eden', a paradise which will recreate a 'Lost Eden.' Prayers and sacred formulae are painstakingly learnt by heart and the repetition of these prayers is understood to bring the believer into direct communion with the Rizalista 'saints,' including Rizal himself. Prayer is seen as the means of transcending the world of appearances and entering into the reality beyond where Christ and Jose Rizal, the Holy Virgin, the revolutionary heroes and older saints such as Father Burgos are

preparing the new order. The 'land of Paradise' continues to exist but Filipinos must learn in the 'land of promise' how to re-enter it. Because the past is present, the Rizalista is obliged to understand it and be part of it to ensure his salvation. (1978:154)

The Rizalian tradition, notes Shoesmith, provides a context within which the rural folk [and the urban proletariat as well inasmuch as these are migrants from the provinces and therefore retain many beliefs of rural origin] interpret external changes as signs of the divine plan -- a world-view that determines the followers' response to developments in the "actual" world. Though political or economic grievances may trigger a particular response, Rizalian beliefs, "being eschatological and apocalyptic, impose their own order on events: the movement responds to an internal dynamic whose rhythm is not necessarily tied to obvious economic or political changes." (1978:154-155) In other words, symbolic systems and ideologies "develop a metaphysical life of their own and acquire qualities which stubbornly resist being reduced to mere reflections of the social order." (Lewis, 1979:105)

How then do we explain this millennial tradition -- from Hermano Pule's Cofradia to the Rizalista cults?

A. Sturtevant's Perspective: Revitalization in the Revolution

Looking at these peasant movements from 1840 to 1940 shows a "discordant," "turbulent" tradition or heritage, the "common theme" or "connecting link" of which is a "religious" or "supernatural element."

Sturtevant's thesis is that these movements are "revitalization efforts" arising from the existence of serious cultural tensions in the Philippines. The basic conflict in the countryside thus was neither economic nor political. "Instead, it grew from a complex clash between customary and modern tendencies. The uprisings, in short, should be regarded as by-products of the stress between what Robert Redfield called the little and great traditions." (1976:17)

B. Ileto: the *Pasyon* and Revolution.

Curiously, while Sturtevant ends his book with the LM, Ileto (1979) begins his with the LM, using Sturtevant's account. Ileto shares Sturtevant's notion of heritage. The Lapiang Malaya affair, according to Ileto, is not an isolated event or an aberration in Philippine history. Instead of resorting to convenient explanations like 'fanaticism,' 'nativism,' and 'millenarianism' which only alienate us further from the *kapatid* [brother] who lived through it, what we modern Filipinos need, says Ileto, "first of all is a set of conceptual tools, a grammar, that would help us understand the world of the *kapatid*, which is part of our world." (1979:2-3)

The problem with previous studies of the Philippine revolution and for that matter Philippine society and culture, argues Ileto, is that it is viewed from the perspective of the educated elite -- a view "from above." The dominant view of current scholarship of such social scientists as Carl Lande, Mary Hollnsteiner, Charles Kaut and Jean Grossholtz (from the Ateneo Institute of Philippine Culture) is the patron-client model which assumes that lowland Philippine society naturally tends towards equilibrium: the forging of reciprocal ties between the elite on the one hand and the uneducated peasant and laborer on the other is viewed in terms of economic exchange, in which the former is the benefactor and the latter the debtor. In this view, vertical loyalties to landlords and local *politicos* and not class conflict shape the dynamics of Philippine politics.³

Such a view, though partly correct, notes Ileto, "cannot account for the solidarity found among peasant rebels or the 'utopian' form of the communities they seek to create." (1979:12) Indeed, we should guard against reducing Philippine society to this image. "We should take into account the innumerable instances in the past when popular movements threatened to upset or overturn the prevailing social structure." (Ileto, 1979:13)

Though Iletto shares the same goal with Sturtevant, that is, to investigate the tradition that animated Philippine peasant movements, he criticizes the latter for his evolutionary approach. This, according to Iletto (1982:100), stems from Hobsbawm's evolutionary framework, which was applied to Southeast Asian peasant movements by the late Harry Benda (1965) who influenced, in turn, David Sweet (1970) and Sturtevant (1969, 1976). Thus, social movements are classified in an evolutionary plane -- from pure social banditry (reformist, prepolitical) to millenarianism (utopian, religious) to their ultimate form in modern revolutionary movements. (Iletto, 1982:99) Hobsbawm, thus "took the vantage point of modern, revolutionary proletarian consciousness as that which everything should develop into or else they would be failures. Thus he discussed movements in terms of their degree of rationality, organization and political sophistication." (Iletto, 1982:99-100) To Iletto, this "does not take us very far [toward] understanding the mentality of the inarticulate." (1982:101) Thus, because Sturtevant was concerned with classifying each peasant movement according to its proportionate ingredients of the religious or secular, rational or irrational, progressive or retrogressive, nationalist or anarchist, he failed to decode the language and gestures of peasant rebels, at best interpreting them in the light of psychological stress-strain theories, thus explaining away whatever creative impulse lies in them. (Iletto, 1982:9)

Iletto's method begins by analyzing the "texts" of the period in question, as well as the particular "texts" of the peasant movements themselves. These would include discourses and rituals -- the folklore, songs, poems that were popular in the countryside and the most important ritual of all, Holy Week, whose most important text is the *Pasyon* (story of Jesus Christ in verse form). Iletto asserts that the masses' experience of Holy Week fundamentally shaped the style of peasant brotherhoods and uprisings during the Spanish and early American colonial periods. The various rituals of Holy Week, particularly the reading and dramatization of the *Pasyon* had, according to Iletto two quite contradictory functions in society. First, they were used by the Spanish

colonizers to inculcate among the *Indios* loyalty to Spain and Church, encouraging at the same time preoccupation with morality and the afterlife rather than with conditions in this world. The second function, unintended by the friars, was to provide lowland Philippine society with a language for articulating its own values, ideals, and even hopes of liberation.

The *Pasyon* is the "master text." (1982:95) Ileto does not explain, however, his approach to interpreting the *Pasyon* text -- whether, for example, he uses the method of Paul Ricoeur ⁴ -- though he cites Dominick LaCapra's essay (1980) on recent modes of approaching texts from a historian's perspective. His approach seems to be that of comparing various texts common to the 19th century period -- folklore such as the legend of *Bernardo Carpio*, popular songs and poems of the revolutionary period, and the *Pasyon* text as it was sang during Holy Week -- with the oral and written discourses of the various brotherhoods starting from the *Cofradía de San Jose* of Hermano Pule to the *Katipunan* and then to the post-Katipunan movements that continued the struggle for *kalayaan* (freedom). From all these discourses, using the *Pasyon* as the master text, Ileto then culls concepts or "categories" that the various texts share in common. Such categories would then reveal meanings that constituted the world-view underlying the protest movement against established authority during the 19th century.

The *Pasyon* text, as master text, then is the "reference myth" (a Levi-Straussian notion) around which the categories or "basic units of comprehension" can be delineated. (Ileto, 1982:97) Thus, we can discern in the speeches, songs, poems and recollections of the Revolution "the repetition, largely on an unconscious level (underscoring mine), of *Pasyon* categories of perception." (Ileto, 1982:97)

The two most popular texts in Spanish Philippines -- the *Pasyon* and the *Bernardo Carpio* epic -- provide the historian with an access to structures (not contents) of thought [underscoring mine]. (Ileto, 1982:104) The basic structural

feature of the *Pasyon*, observes Ileta, is the Lost Eden/Fall/Redemption sequence -- a feature repeated profusely in practically all of the discourses of peasant movements.

Ileta writes,

The Lost Eden is not, in the final analysis, an empirically verifiable state of bliss but an emblem of the perceived difference between a past time and the present. When Rizal and other *ilustrados* wrote of the pre-Spanish past as a state of perfection and harmony, they not only attempted to resurrect an empirical past, but constructed it in terms of a difference between a Lost Eden and the Age of Darkness wrought by Spanish colonialism, a structure that is also found in the *Pasyon*. The logical aftermath is an awakening, a redemption, a passage to light. We have already made reference to the repetition of this structure in Katipunan literature. Now in post-Katipunan literature, the structure is repeated with the uprising against Spain occupying the Lost Eden position. Brian Fegan, using both historical records and interviews with veterans of the anticolonial struggles during the American regime, corroborates this reworking of the myth of the Lost Eden during the years of the Ricartist 'disturbances.' And even in this day and age the pattern occasionally becomes visible to us. Working in the early 1970s among 'people who call themselves seekers, traditionalists, and curers' in Majayjay Laguna, Robert Love describes their ideas of time (*panahon*) as follows: 'They reduce the *panahon* to a situation of absolute contrast between chaos and peace, wholeness and dispersion, power (*kapangyarihan*) and powerlessness. The result of this is that that which has been lost to man, the *panahon* of the Father, becomes possible of attainment again in the age of the Spirit.' (1982:118-9)

C. Robert Love: a Geertzian rendering of the *Samahan*

Applying Ileta's textual analysis to a contemporary *samahan*, *Samahan of Papa God*, Love uncovered a rich symbolism -- the Myth of Infinito Dios -- as embodying the traditional concept of power that Ileta alluded to in his work. The myth of *Infinito Dios* symbolizes the cosmic power that animates the universe, a cosmic force that is embedded in nature. Access to that cosmic power actualizes a state of potency (a notion Love learned from Covar) which one can avail himself of through religious practices -- the use of *anting-anting*, rituals which must be matched by a proper orientation to the world and a virtuous life.

The myth of *Infinito Dios* is connected to the notion of Time -- God's time and man's time. God's time refers to the past, when man was in harmony with God, and

therefore shared in His potency. God's time then is the condition of Paradise. Because of man's sinfulness, his primal connection to God was severed -- hence the loss of potency. This is the condition of the Lost Eden. But potency can be regained. Reunion with God can be achieved. God will see to this. But man must prepare for this promised redemption by leading a virtuous life and thus, through religious devotion, participate in the fulfillment of the prophecy. (Love, 1978:264-266)

Peasant discourse is articulated in the form of binary contrasts: then/now; Creator/created; *magaling/malakas*; etc. In his conversations with peasants, Love discovered the peasants' conception of the moral universe expressed in the following terms: "that which was whole (*buo*) then is dispersed or has disappeared (*sumabog*, *nawala*) now; that which was peaceful (*tahimik*) is now chaotic (*magulo*); there was no addiction to vices and the pursuit of selfish wants (*sariling kagustohan*) then, but there is much addiction and licentiousness (*kalayawan*) now; and there was bravery and firmness of will (*lakas ng loob*, *tibay ng kalooban*) then, whereas now people are weak-of-will (*mahina ang loob*) and easily fall prey to temptation (*dala na ngayon ng tukso*); elders were obeyed then, while children are obeyed now." (280)

The point to remember is that the present time, because it is contrasted to the past and the future, is problematic -- the present constitutes a separation, a rapture with Divine Power. The past is the Lost Eden and the future is the promised Redemption. Therefore, the past (Tradition) and the future (Redemption) mean the same thing: oneness with God. (292)

Thus, peasants speak in such enigmatic words like "that which was in the beginning shall be again in the end." (192) In these words they express the belief that unity can be re-established "if a contract is made," that is to say, a covenant with God made through an act of will (*loob*), an internal condition of self that is attuned to the divine signs. (261)

Love writes (291).

To those who have adopted a certain stance (*paninindigan*) in favor of tradition the 'past' and the 'future' become as one when contrasted with the present. I repeat here that this is not the only way Tagalog thought can speak about 'time.' Rather, it is the way people who call themselves seekers, traditionalists, and curers do talk about the *panahon* [time] when their intention is to make sense of or give meaning to the present. They reduce the *panahon* to a situation of absolute contrast between chaos and peace, wholeness and dispersion, power (*kapangyarihan*) and powerlessness. The result of this is that that which has been lost to man, the *panahon* of the father, becomes possible of attainment again in the age of the spirit. For those, that is, who are willing to see." [Love's fn.: Geertz on Schutz in the introduction to Person, Time and Conduct in Bali and Levi-Strauss on Sartre in the "Time Regained" chapter of The Savage Mind].

The inner self, in turn, is blocked from the religious experience of revelation by its opposite -- "the body" (*katawang lupa*), which when contrasted with *loob* has several synonyms: *kalayawan* (the "freedom" of the spoiled child); *sariling kagustuhan* ("selfish wants"), or simply *ang sarili* ("the unrelated or unconnected self"). In short, it is vices (*bisyo*) that prevent the *loob* from having a *karanasan* (religious experience) by which *kapangyarihan* (power) is made available to the person. (294-295)

In this state of the self, in which *loob* is attuned to *kapangyarihan*, one is said to be *magaling* (potent) in contrast to a *malakas* (power associated with material wealth and high status). As Love explains,

To be *magaling*, therefore, is to be the very opposite of *malakas*. Rather than taking action on the basis of one's own strength, one is witness (*saksi*) to the effectiveness-powerfulness of something else, something beyond and utterly in contrast with *lakas* or one's own strength. By recognizing or acknowledging -- remembering is the Tagalog word -- the true nature or true origin of the power behind the power-object, whether an amulet or a sacred book or a prayer formula or a spirit, one can come to make use of it oneself. (330)

D. Consolacion Alaras: *Pamathalaan* -- Opening the Covenant of the Blessed Mother

The work of Consolacion Alaras (1988a, b) incorporates the researches and theoretical perspectives of Ileto, Love, and Covar. Whereas Love uses the concept of *samahan* to denote peasant religious communities, Alaras uses the term *kapatiran* to

denote a more all-embracing religious movement. She follows Iletto in tracing the *kapatiran* tradition to the Cofradia de San Jose of the 1840s. She goes beyond Iletto, though, in perceiving a tradition that is unfolding towards a destiny -- *a la* Hegelian fashion. But unlike Iletto, Covar and Love, who as social scientists maintain some distance between themselves and their subject of study, Alaras incorporates herself into the *kapatiran* she studies, becoming a leading member of Bromoki (Brotherhood of Mother's Kids) in the course of her research and indeed, not only interpreting its religious world-view but even believing it herself. Alaras even uses Bromoki's religious practices as part of her methodology, e.g., dreams, prophecies, spirit of the glass, etc.

Alaras begins with Iletto's notion of a text -- "spiritual brotherhood as a text means that as a social movement or group of people in the Philippines, it generates a network of meanings whose interpretations may determine its fate or future -- whether to be regarded as a buried voice or a dynamic force worth considering." (1988a:2) Alaras thus shares Iletto's hermeneutic project -- to restore the "buried," "hidden" or "lost meanings attached to this much-misunderstood group in the Philippines." (1988a:3-4) That Alaras uses the singular group (*kapatiran*) instead of the plural groups (*mga kapatiran*) is instructive. For Alaras, though there are various groups under different names spread throughout the archipelago, there is only one *kapatiran*, one spiritual brotherhood, defined by a continuous tradition and a common vision, whose history can be delineated as the fulfillment of a prophecy.

The research task then for Alaras is how to read this Hegelian unfolding of the *kapatiran* spirit? The goal is to find the "units of meaning" in the *kapatiran*'s "own voice." But to achieve this, one must include the researcher's "internalized readings" as he/she engages in a dialogue with the *kapatiran* and thus becomes a "co-creator of meanings" -- hence the term "dialogic voice." (1988a:4) This dialogic construction of meanings is achieved through "what the *kapatiran* calls the process of *kaloob* or gift

according to one's state of loob or inner self. If the researcher seeks sincerely with an open mind and heart, and complete with heavenly guidance, then there is no reason why *kalooob* will not be obtained." (1988a)⁵

What then is the "*katatiran* vision," for which "heavenly guidance" is needed to save it from "oblivion, ridicule, and even persecution?" (1988a) The *katatiran*'s own reading of Philippine society, says Alaras, "invokes a return to the lost or wounded unity of the spiritual and the material, the intuitive and the rational, man and nature, nature and God, and God and nation." (1988a) The goal or vision of the *katatiran* then is to restore the "wholeness of God and man, God and creation, man and creation, God, society, and history." (1988a:8)

The *katatiran* vision then calls for a "new theocracy" which the *katatiran* calls *Gobierno Espiritual* (Spiritual Government) or *Pamathalaan*, a term that Marius Diaz, a Bromoki member, coined from *pamahalaan* (government) and *Bathala* (God). (1988a:8) Central to this concept, says Alaras, is the recognition that a government without God can never succeed in all its fullness: "only God can bring a nation and consequently the world to a destiny beyond compare." (1988a:8-9)

The *katatiran* perceives this call as a sacred covenant (*tipan*) with God. As in biblical history, the call is first made by God, and so, according to the *katatiran*, the answer to this sacred call is nationhood in union with God -- in other words *Pamathalaan* (1988a:7) Curiously, Alaras adds, "Now, as to its fate whether to remain a dark discourse or a radiant direction is for the present generation to ponder upon." (1988a:7)

Translated in historical terms, this *tipan* then means "the coming together of brethren from various walks of life to share in the redemptive process for the liberation and wholeness of *Inang Bayan* [Motherland]." (1988a:10) Currently, this coming together is being spearheaded by the various Rizalista groups led by the *Banal na Angkan* and under the spiritual guidance of the Bromoki.

In this coming together, the sacred light marks the place of *tipan* as an anointed spot or center, signaling the formation of a sacred community or people of God. (1988a:10) The sacred center then becomes a source of power -- the New Jerusalem. The implication is that the Philippines, according to Alaras, "can truly be a light and power to the world." (1988a:10) To realize this, says Alaras, the various sectors or voices in Philippine society must achieve unity, must "harmonize without destroying the kataalan or distinct identity of any voice." (1988a:11) And this is what constitutes *Pamathalaan* -- a unity of God, brethren, and country. (1988a:11) This unity or wholeness is exemplified in the the Holy Trinity or *Sagrada Familia*, a dominant motif in the *kapatiran* -- as can be seen, for example, in such *kapatiran* names as *Tres Personas Solo Dios*, *Banal na Angkan Tatlong K*, *Maharlika Banal na Angkan*, *Santisima Trinidad*, *Kaamaamahan Kainainahan*, etc. (1988a:13)

This motif of the Holy Trinity affirms the unity that must exist between the Father, Son and Mother -- there can never be a Holy Family without the Mother. Therefore without the mother there is no unity, no *Pamathalaan*. The *kapatiran* believes that the Holy Spirit is the *Mahal na Ina* (Blessed Mother). This perception of the Blessed Mother is a unique feature in the *kapatiran* discourse, according to Alaras, signifying a "structure of mentality called Matriarchy, which is the root of brotherhood or *kapatiran*." (1988a:13) This principle of matriarchy is "characterized by the sacred ideals of freedom, equality, and justice. Indeed, Alaras, citing Bachofen (1967) and Evelyn Reed (1981), asserts that "as history and archeology show, there used to be a time when matriarchy reigned in the universe." (1988a:13)

But then, says Alaras, matriarchy was displaced by patriarchy through colonization and capitalism. (1988a:14; 1988b:14-15) When this happened, "the *kabuuhan* values (holistic values) were inevitably fragmented -- giving rise to an expression like 'lost paradise'." (1988a:14) The loss of matriarchy, thus, means the loss of wholeness, the loss of equality, and the loss of power. A loss of power that is symbolized in the

kapatiran Myth of *Infinito Dios* in which Woman is "presented as the source of light giving power to the world." (14)

The recovery of this power then is the goal of matriarchal brotherhoods such as Brotherhood of Mother's Kids, *Bathalismo Inang Mahiwaga*, *Inang Adarna*, *Maria Makiling*, *Maria Banahaw*, *Ciudad Mistica de Dios*, *Mariang Sinukuan*.

Opening the covenant of the Blessed Mother (*Ang Pagbubukas sa Tipan ng Mahal na Ina*), therefore is a call for a new wholeness -- after the debacle of colonization and capitalism -- which is a call for a new matriarchy, a new theocracy, in short a new *Pamathalaan*. This is the prophecy contained, says Alaras, in *kapatiran* prayers and hymns. Presently, a veil still hides the *Tipan ng Mahal na Ina* (Covenant of the Mother). The *kapatiran*, therefore, must facilitate the lifting of the veil.

As Alaras says, "The complete unfolding or revelation of this so-called Covenant of the Mother will usher in a new social order that affirms power with meaning. And for the Philippines in particular, it means the sacred destiny as a blessed land...." (1988a:15) How then can *Pamathalaan* be achieved and the prophecy fulfilled? The *kapatiran* answer is through the *patotoo* (an act of witnessing) -- the *kapatiran* must willingly embrace the darkness of ordeals, tests, and even sacrifices, for the sake of God, brethren and country. (1988a:11) This *patotoo* is the *kapatiran's* way of freely maintaining communication between the Creator and the created -- "the created must be sensitive to the voice and promptings of the Creator through every part of His creation." (1988a:12)

Kapatiran members resort to various forms of *ganap* (an act or ritual in a *kapatiran* gathering) -- prayers, songs, praises, *talinghaga* (Cryptic metaphors), mediumship, healing, vigils, and pilgrimages -- undertaken to attain *kaganapan* (fulfillment), a necessary condition for the realization of the prophesied *Pamathalaan*. This foretold nationhood of spirituality is symbolized by the *Sagrada Familia*: a unity of God The Father, the Motherland and her children, the people. (1988a:20)

Lakaran (pilgrimage) "is a longer form of *ganap* which strives to join what have been divided by providing an experience of *damay* or compassion among the participants coming from diverse walks of life, ideologies, and even faiths. The intention is to achieve a unity of *loob* that can bring out the brotherhood of light, just like in the Myth of *Impinito Dios* so that in this spirit, pilgrimage becomes a *tipan* and *talinghaga* of Power -- power for the voiceless, the oppressed, the poor and the ignorant." (1988a:22)

Critical notes:

The works of Sturtevant, Iletto, Love, and Alaras, thus, represent a new turn in Philippine social science research in that they focus on the "little tradition." With the exception of Sturtevant, all are hermeneutic in their approach seeking to present a "view from below," from the perspective of the participants themselves, the unheard voices of the masses.

However, inspired by the Geertzian hermeneutic which has its roots in the Weberian-Parsonian perspective (see Ortner, 1984)), they tend to view society as a structure in equilibrium in which various traditions can spring and run alongside each other, never intermingling but always balancing each other.

My own study suggests that opposed traditions -- whether from "below" or "above," "great" or "little" -- precisely because they are opposed, are not separate and independent of each other as Weber would have it. Opposed traditions constitute and define each other -- in a structure of power. Those "from below" constitute their world in opposition to the dominant power in society. Their counter-discourse envisions a moral order that is contrasted to the prevailing order that is legitimized in turn by the dominant discourse. As E.P. Thompson (1978) argues, tradition is not a burden of the past upon the present, not an inert legacy that shapes the consciousness of people with its own prerogatives, but an activity in the production of a past that is rooted in the

social struggles over hegemony -- the processes that produce tradition are part and parcel of the structure of social conflict. (cited by Arif Dirlik, 1987:26-27)

The hermeneutic approach of Iltis et al., valuable as it is in recovering hidden meanings, does not explain how ideas arise. It is not enough to acknowledge that ideas have historical contexts. It must be emphasized that ideas are constituted in social practice -- as the peasants struggle to gain control of their lives, as they seek desperately to free themselves from a hegemony that denies them dignity. Thus, peasant religious discourse should be analyzed as constituting an ideological practice. (Turton and Tanabe, 1984)

To show that peasant millennial discourse constitutes an oppositional ideology to the dominant discourse in society what we need is not simply a Marxist critique but one that is informed by a deconstructionist perspective.⁵ Using this approach, I shall now attempt an analysis of the counter-discourse of the *Ciudad Mística de Dios*.

Part III

The Counter-discourse of the *Ciudad Mística de Dios*: Space, time, gender and history.

Deconstruction, according to Derrida, is a critique of metaphysics -- a cosmological practice which construes the world using binary oppositions, one of which is affirmed as prior and superior to the other. (Derrida, 1976,1977) The second term is regarded as derivative and accidental to the first, which is either an ideal limit or the central term in the metaphysical system. The first term is privileged as connoting presence, proximity, ownership, property, identity, and therefore, legitimacy. The second term stands for absence, difference, alteration, history, repetition, undesirability, and therefore, illegitimacy. Thus, the second term is suppressed because it endangers the values the first term affirms, threatening the breakup of those reassuring and empowering values embedded in the first term. (Ryan, 1982:9)

Deconstruction, thus, can be a powerful weapon in the critique of institutions, particularly, in the critique of the dominant discourse. The "history from below" project of Ileto, is an attempt to resurrect the "excess" data that is suppressed, and therefore, made absent by the dominant discourse of Spanish colonialism, a discourse that is still evident today in the predominantly Catholic mainstream Filipino culture. An ethnography -- informed by the deconstructionist method -- that articulates the silent voices of the inarticulate, thus, can bring to light, and make present the insurrection, to use a Foucauldian term,⁶ of subjugated local knowledges, an insurrection that, after all, has been going on among the millennial folk since the 1840s.

A semiotic analysis of the CMD cosmology reveals a counter-hegemonic discourse articulated against the hegemony of the state. Initially, this was the hegemony of the Spanish colonial regime, and later, that of the post-colonial Philippine republic. The

counter-hegemonic discourse of the CMD is manifested in the way power is appropriated through the inversion of symbols embedded in the dominant discourse's notions of time, space, and gender. The CMD's counter-discourse is thus a metaphysical ju-jitsu, as it were, involving the reversal of terms in the binary opposites of the dominant discourse.

A. Space: *loob* (inside) /*labas* (outside)

State hegemony demarcates a territory that is covered by its laws. Inside this territory is a space that is defined as legitimate, civilized. Outside of this territory is a space that is illegitimate, uncivilized, outside of the law. The CMD cosmology reverses this definition in its counter-discourse by privileging what is outside.

The rebel is regarded as *taong taga-labas* (the outsider, the outlaw). But the rebel is also a prophet, a healer, and therefore, *magaling* (potent), that is, someone imbued with *kapangyarihan* (power). This is because he is in touch with the sacred, the real repository of power.

A related concept to *labas* is *bundok* (boondocks). One who rebels is said to be *namundok* (he went to the hills).⁷ In order to achieve spiritual power (e.g., the power to heal), one must abandon all self interests -- family, material possessions, etc. And one achieves this through *pamumundok* (pilgrimage to the mountain). Indeed, one actualizes the potency or efficacy of his *anting-anting* (amulet) by taking it to the *bundok* or while there, he can avail himself of an *anting-anting*.

Reminiscing on his decision to go to Mt. Banahaw (where he later joined the CMD), Mamay says:

"Ang aking nalalabing buhay ay iniukol ko na lang sa gawaing para sa Diyos. Tinipon kong lahat ang aking pamilya, ang asawa ko't mga anak. Sabi ko, 'Ako'y aalis, hindi ko alam ang aking patutunguhan, kung saan man ako makararating malalaman din ninyo. Ang ating kaunting ari-arian diyan inyo nang lahat. Kung sakali ako'y makasilip at makadalaw sa inyo, makakain at makatulog... Mula dito hanggang bayan wala akong makitang ni isang maliit na pampang, naglakad dahil wala nang sasakyan.'" (1980)

[I dedicated the rest of my life to doing God's work. I gathered all my family -- my wife and children. I told them, 'I'm leaving. To where, I don't know. But wherever I shall end up, rest assured that you will be informed. Whatever possessions I have, take it now, its all yours. Maybe oneday, I can visit and see you, eat and sleep... On my journey to town, I did not see even a small river bank. I just walked because there was nothing to ride on.]

The reference to the mountain in relation to sacrifice and power points to a moral universe in which all that is valued in civil society, i.e., within the law, is negated as pertaining to self interests -- worldly possessions, attachment to family, status, etc. The opposite of these is a state of self that is "emptied" of all personal interests -- an emptied *loob* (inner self) is one imbued with power. And this state is attainable only in a moral universe that is outside of civil society -- as symbolically represented by the sacred mountain where God dwells. Power, thus is identified with what is sacred, and what is sacred is equated with nature which, in turn, is contrasted to what is *gawa ng tao* (man-made).

The pilgrims of Mt. Bahahaw refer to the mountain as the Church of God because the sacred altars are *likas* (natural) and not man-made in contrast to those built by the established churches. Thus civil society is contrasted with the world of nature, a sacred world outside the hegemony of the state.

We can better appreciate the symbolic reversal in this counter-discourse by considering some themes in the *Noli Me Tangere*,⁸ the now classic novel of Dr. Jose Rizal, who is venerated as the pre-eminent figure in the CMD's pantheon of heroes (and by all millenarian groups in the Philippines for that matter).

The leading character in the novel is Crisostomo Ibarra, a rich and highly educated but politically naive *mestizo* (half-breed) do-gooder, whose motives in wanting to do good for his people is tainted by personal interests -- hardly the epitome of a hero in the minds of the Banahaw folk.

In contrast, Elias, the outlaw, the outsider, the rebel, who is being sought by the *guardia civil* (police) but whose identity is not known and who, whenever he enters the

town incognito, is an unheard, silent voice is presented by its author as the embodiment of wisdom and inner strength. His power and charisma are overwhelming -- eluding and outwitting and even physically subduing the forces of the law/evil (an underlying theme in the *Noli* is that evil and colonial law are synonymous). In an intellectual confrontation with the European educated Ibarra, the force of Elias' arguments finally defeats Ibarra who for the first time in the novel acknowledges Elias' wisdom and wonders where the latter got his ideas.

This theme of the outsider/hero is repeated in the theme of being outside the reach of the law as the condition for peace and a happy existence. Basilio, a boy pursued by the *guardia civil* on suspicion of a crime he did not commit and whose mother, as a result of the oppression and calumny she has suffered, has gone insane, sought refuge in the mountain after fleeing from the *guardia civil* who managed to inflict a superficial bullet wound on his forehead. Fortunately, a family was living in the mountain -- in peace, happiness, and amidst the abundance of food such as game, wild fruits, and vegetables. This family nursed Basilio to health. On Christmas eve when Basilio was strong enough to walk, he bid the good family goodbye, so that he can go back to the town and look for his mother, for it was Christmas, a time for reunions. The little daughter, Juli, who has by now become Basilio's buddy and playmate, dissuaded him from leaving and warned Basilio emphatically, "Don't go. Down there are thieves and bandits."

The force of this warning is even made more stunning in its being uttered by an innocent girl. This apparently innocent remark achieves an inversion of the dominant discourse and therefore becomes a critique of Spanish colonial society. The dominant discourse construes the mountain, that which is beyond the reach of the law, as the hideout of bandits and robbers who intermittently come down from the mountain to disturb the peace of the towns. Note that Juli's remark reverses this -- in the town are bandits and robbers but up here, in the mountain, one can be happy because there is

abundance and there are no bad men to do harm. Indeed the mountain has become a place of healing for the wounded Basilio who got his wound "down there" in the town, inflicted by the forces of the state, the *guardia civil*. In the mountain, outside of the protection of church bells and the *guardia civil*, Basilio was healed, and nursed back to health. "Down there," in the town, inside the church's and the state's territory, his mother is suffering from madness, alone in her agony.

Rizal himself, in his being sentenced as a criminal and condemned to death by the Spanish regime with the blessings of the church, became, in the popular imagination, the epitome of the outsider-prophet-healer, the embodiment of power, the *Tagalog* Christ.

Given the popular reading of the text that is Rizal, it should not be any wonder that, as the historian Iloilo has observed, "In almost every report of 'disturbances' during the first decade of American rule, there is mention of Rizal as reincarnated in 'fanatical' leaders, as the object of communication in seances, as the object of worship in churches; in general as literally the 'spirit' behind the unrest. ...[P]leasant leaders who challenged the colonial order in the 1920s and the 1930s claimed to be in communication with Rizal." (Iloilo: , 323)

Iloilo does not say that sightings of the venerated hero and contacts with his spirit were alleged to have occurred in Mt. Banahaw, an isolated place of refuge and pilgrimage constituting that sacred space of power -- the New Jerusalem, the New Heaven and Earth -- outside of civil society.

B. Time: the past, the present, and the future in millennial consciousness.

In the dominant discourse of Spanish Catholic hegemony, the present is privileged over the past which is viewed as the age of darkness, of paganism and sin, a period of non-civilization. Likewise, in the post-colonial Philippine republic of today, the past is problematized as traditional, non-modern, superstitious, and non-rational. Under the developmental philosophy concocted by the International Monetary Fund-World Bank technocrats, the peasants must free themselves from the shackles of the past -- towards modernization and development.

Such dominant discourse is resisted in a reversal of the meanings attached to the past, the present and the future in the counter-discourse of the peasant millennial tradition in the Philippines.

As we have seen in Love's interpretation of the *samahan*'s conception of time,⁹ it is the present that is problematized as deficient and degenerate, in contrast to the past which is affirmed as God's time, a time of wholeness. The future, likewise, in contrast to the present is affirmed as the time of Redemption or reunion with God.

As Love has discovered in his study, a fundamental "time" demarcation in the Tagalog language is the distinction between *noong una* (before) and *ngayon* (now). This contrast between two time dimensions (*panahon*), according to Love, forms the basis for the articulation of traditional religious and political thought among Tagalog peasants. (Love, 271)

As Love explains, "In the contrast *noong una* / *ngayon*, that which comes on either side of the '/' is of less importance than the fact of the contrast itself." (292) Thus to understand the meaning of the contrast, the thing to ask is what use is being made in contrasting one dimension with the other? (271) "So, while *noong una* translates as 'that which came before,' if we were to ask, 'Before what?', we could rightly only expect the answer, 'Before the present,' or 'Before our present condition arrived' (*Bago dumating ang panahon natin.*). " (272)

This means that the two conditions are not fixed into a temporal sequence and eras may be lumped together (272); either *panahon* can refer to a great span of time. (276)

Love writes,

Any reference to one condition implies a contrast with the other and because the two conditions are otherwise unfixed it is possible and indeed common, again for certain purposes to speak of what might seem to have been a long time ago as part of the *panahon* called *ngayon*, and - - the opposite -- to include within *noong una* that which might be considered (by myself, for example, as an outsider) a part of the more recent condition. What this means is that one can speak of the *noong una* of Adam, of Noah, of Jesus, of the Spanish period, of one's ancestors, of one's parents and grandparents, or even of one's youth as a single (past) era -- always with the assumption that that which prevails (*umiiral*) at the present is the reverse of this. Only a youth would not have a *noong una* in any sense. He is thus inexperienced (*walang karanasan*), that is, he has nothing against which to measure the present. (273)

Thus the contrast is made to make a moral point (272), that is, the past is brought up to measure the present, to evaluate it in moral terms. The contrast between *noon* / *ngayon* is thus used to highlight a reversal or shift in the present. In other words, the contrast is made "wherever and whenever one wants to say something about the moral conditions of those who inhabit the world today." (280)

How then does this conception of time relate to the millennial folk's view of history? The distinction between the two conditions acquires a moral force when the contrast is made in relation to a binary opposition we have discussed earlier -- the *loob* / *labas* (*inside* / *outside*) dichotomy -- whether the *panahon* (time dimension) is inside or outside historical time. Thus the more fundamental distinction is Eternity / history, wherein historical events are judged in terms of the Eternal.

Thus the period which is said to have history is always to be distinguished from "back when there was not yet history (*noong wala pang kasaysayan*)." (268) This was the time before creation. *Kasaysayan* in Tagalog means literally "story," hence a period without *kasaysayan* is one about which no story can be told. Thus, before all creation

there was only God as light or as power. This is the myth of the *Impinito Dios*. This time before history, is the *panahon ng Ama* (Father's time), a *panahon*, that is outside of history, in other words, Eternity. That which is outside of history, therefore, is used as a reference point against which much of what happens in historical time (*panahon ng kasaysayan*) is to be understood and judged -- as the dispersal and loss of power and light. (268-269) Hence, that which is inside historical time is a degenerate condition, a condition of strife and enmity, which are the signs of a loss of power and of light.

The *panahon* when paradise is regained is the *panahon* of the Spirit, which is likewise outside of historical time. Because that which has been lost to man, the *panahon* of the Father, becomes possible of attainment again in the age of the Spirit (the *panahon* of the Mother), "that which was in the beginning shall be again in the end."

Thus, the past (Tradition) and the future (Redemption) become as one when contrasted with the present (historical time). The present -- history -- is thereby reduced to a situation of absolute contrast between chaos and peace, wholeness and dispersion, power and powerlessness.

This present condition, history, is bound up with civil society. To be in historical time is to be inside civil society. Conversely, to be outside of civil society is to be in touch with the sacred, that condition of power when one is in touch with Eternity, when one has transcended historical time.

This may well be the reference myth (to use Levi-Strauss' term)¹⁰ that informs peasant religious movements. Interestingly, this space/time structure in peasant religious consciousness can be discerned in the story (history) of *Cabesang Tales* in the two novels of Rizal. In the *Noli Me Tangere*, Tales is presented as the father in the family that lived in the mountain, the very same family that nourished Basilio back to health. The Tales family was then living in peace and happiness, for they were in the mountain, outside of civil society, away from "down there" where there are robbers and

bandits. But in the *Noli's* sequel, the *El Filibusterismo*, this same family decides to leave the protective bosom of the mountain. They venture to settle in the lowland, inside the jurisdiction of the friar and the *guardia civil*. The result is catastrophic -- the family gets destroyed inside civil society. Tales' land is confiscated by the religious corporation and consequently he becomes a bandit. Juli, his daughter, commits suicide as the only way to escape being raped by the parish priest, under whose care and protection she entrusted herself. Tano, in order to pay the debts of the family, had to join the dreaded *guardia civil*. The grandfather, Tandang Selo, unable to bear so much tragedy, loses his ability to speak. And the ultimate tragedy of all -- Tano ends up fatally shooting his own father. All these events happen inexorably from the time they came down from the mountain, to try their luck inside civil society.

Rizal finished writing his novels in 1887. A similar tragedy befell the Rizal family in the 1890s.¹¹ Within Philippine colonial society under the hegemony of Spain and the Catholic church, the Rizal family is destroyed in a chain of events that is as inexorable as the fate of the Tales family in Rizal's novels. Rizal's mother, Dona Teodora, is imprisoned, his father, Don Francisco and brother Paciano get deported to the Marianas islands. Rizal himself, after an internationally publicized military trial, is finally executed. But that is where the correspondence with the Tales family ends.

Rizal, on the eve of his execution, composes a farewell poem, *Mi Ultimo Adios*, which is then smuggled out of his prison cell. The leader of the *Katipunan* (the revolutionary party), Andres Bonifacio, gets hold of Rizal's poem and after translating it into Tagalog (being a vernacular poet himself), distributes copies to the rebels. Meanwhile on the day of his execution, Rizal, contrary to the custom of the condemned man being brought on a carriage to the site of execution, decides to walk from his prison cell in Fort Santiago to Luneta, some one kilometer in distance. By then throngs of people have gathered. Rizal walks past them serenely, politely greeting some of those whose faces he recognized. At the execution site, with his back turned against the

firing squad (for traitors under Spanish law had to be shot behind their backs), as the *comandante* shouts the execution command, in that suspended moment, amidst the hushed tension of the thousands of people who have gathered to witness the execution, Rizal utters a cry that pierced the eerie silence of the morning -- "*Consumatum est.*" As the volley of the muskets ripped the air, Rizal was seen turning around and falling face up to the blue sky of December.

This stunning event together with the circulation of his poem became a rallying symbol for the masses who forthwith plunged themselves into the revolution with even greater fervor. If we are to read Rizal's manner of dying and the poem he wrote as a "text," what was it in this text that struck a chord in the popular imagination? So powerful was this symbol that Rizal became the center of the peasant movements even after Aguinaldo had surrendered to the American forces (after the defeat of the Spaniards). In fact shortly after the death of Rizal, rumors circulated that he did not die, that he was seen roaming around in Mt. Banahaw.

A reading of the poem and viewing his manner of death within the frame of the space/time structure of peasant religious consciousness readily provides the answer.

A stanza in the poem reads,¹²

Land I idolize: prime sorrow among my sorrows:
beloved Filipinas, hear me the farewell word:
I bequeath you everything -- my family, my affections:
I go where no slaves are -- nor butchers, nor oppressors:
where faith cannot kill: where God's the sovereign
lord!

Using this as a key to unraveling the text that is Rizal, it is not farfetched to assert that Rizal has personified through his very actions, and the tragedy of his family, as well as his poem, the image of the rebel-healer-prophet who abandons worldly interests and departs from civil society, to go outside of it -- into that liminal space that is construed as sacred and eternal. Rizal thus has become the epitome of the *magaling* whose very self sacrifice has defied the tyranny of the *malakas*. Indeed,

outside of civil society and in touch with eternity, he became the personification of one endowed with power -- a realization of the myth of the *Impinito Dios*. Within this context, the sprouting of the Rizalista cults among the peasants who witnessed or heard of Rizal's story, his *kasaysayan*, shortly after his death comes as no surprise.

In this discourse, therefore, is history critiqued and the evolutionary notion of civilizing or Christianizing the savages espoused by the colonizing Western powers, or in contemporary terms, of the modernization and development of traditional peasant society advocated by the IMF-WB gurus, is thus negated.

C. Gender and History: The Myth of Maria Bernarda Balitaan

In the case of the CMD, this evolutionary modernizing perspective of the dominant discourse is negated by a counter-discourse involving a transposed conception of gender in the process of Redemption. As in the case of Rizal, this redemptive process is an act of transcendence involving not only a moving out of civil society and history, but more importantly, in so far as the sacred is concerned, a modification of the gender constructions in the dominant discourse of colonial society. Such a symbolic reconstruction is manifested in the unfolding of the redemptive process into two consecutive stages, both of which are regarded as necessary, that is, as divinely ordained -- *itinalaga ng Dios* (God so ordained) said Consuelo Mendoza, the CMD's bishop and secretary general.

These two stages are the two *panahon*:

1. *Ang panahon ng lalake* (the time of men). This is the time of Jesus, of St. Paul, and of Rizal, in which women did not have a voice.

2. *Ang panahon ng babae* (the time of women). This is the time of Maria Bernarda Balitaan, the CMD's founder, the time when woman will prevail over man (*babae ang mananaig sa lalake*).

The belief that the redemptive process was initiated by man which he failed to complete and that it will be finally brought to a close by a woman has political implications. But before elaborating on this point and other related concepts, a clarification of the Tagalog words in contrast to those used in the English language must be made. This will shed light into the subtle nuances of the Tagalog language in so far as conceptions of gender are concerned. Such a linguistic elucidation has important implications for the issues raised in feminist theory.

The contrasts, and their reference to gender, between English and Tagalog are striking:

English:	Tagalog:
Man	<i>Tao</i> (man/woman)
He	<i>Siya</i> (he/she)
Son	<i>Anak</i> (son/daughter)
Brother	<i>Kapatid</i> (brother/sister)
Fellowman	<i>Kapwa</i> (fellow human: man and woman)
Him	<i>Niya</i> (him/her)
His	<i>Kaniya</i> (his/hers)
Brotherhood	<i>Kapatiran</i> (brotherhood/sisterhood)

Note that in the English language, male has priority over female. Whenever the subject's gender is not specified, the masculine form is used. Fellowwoman is never used, indeed it would be awkward, if not ungrammatical, to use it. Likewise, Daughter of God sounds unfamiliar.

But in the Tagalog language, the key terms have no gender reference. Each term can stand for man or woman, it does not matter. Thus, in common usage, gender is not specified. Only when it is necessary to do so are the terms *lalake* and *babae* used. In Tagalog, therefore, language use is not gender marked. Thus, the deconstructionist critique of a male-biased or male oriented patriarchal language does not apply.

What are the implications of this for Filipino indigenous culture? And how do these relate to the counter-discourse of the millenarian tradition in Mt. Banahaw?

In his study of pre-colonial Southeast Asia, Anthony Reid (1988a,b) discovered a "common pattern of relatively high female autonomy and economic importance." (a:629)

Reid writes,

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the region probably represented one extreme of human experience on these issues. It could not be said that women were *equal* to men, since there were very few areas in which they competed directly. Women had different functions from men, but these included transplanting and harvesting rice, weaving, and marketing. Their reproductive role gave them magical and ritual powers which it was difficult for men to match. These factors may explain why the value of daughters was never questioned in Southeast Asia as it was in China, India, and the Middle East; on the contrary, 'the more daughters a man has, the richer he is.' (Galvao, 1544:89; cf. Legazpi, 1569:61) [Reid, 1988a:629]

A similar pattern in contemporary times has been observed by Jane Monnig Atkinson (1982), in her field work among the Wana of Sulawesi, Indonesia. She found in that culture that "gender is not a central organizing principle." (257) In a footnote, Atkinson writes,

My initial research plan was to study gender and ritual specialization, but I abandoned that plan in my dissertation ('Paths of the Spirit Familiars: A Study of Wana Shamanism' [Ph.D. diss., Stanford

University, 1979)) and in subsequent writings, precisely due to my informants' down-playing of the matter. Recently I have addressed the theoretical dimensions of this problem in a paper entitled 'Gender and Engendered Meanings in Wana Shamanism' (unpublished manuscript). Anna Tsing Lowenhaupt found a similar lack of emphasis on gender in her research among the Meratus of nearby Kalimantan (personal communication). (257)

Rosaldo's work (1980) on the Philippines' Ilongots likewise found a more egalitarian community where sex differences are down-played.

Ortner (1981), in her study of gender patterns in Polynesia and Southeast Asia, concludes that "cultures in which kinship (especially sibling) definitions of womanhood have hegemony over sexual and marital definitions appear to be less sex-antagonistic (for example, not only in Polynesia, but also much of Southeast Asia), than cultures (such as India) in which the opposite is the case." (23) (Ortner and Whitehead, see also Ortner's essay).

Philippine pre-colonial society as described by Reid (1988b) typifies Sanday's notion of a society with an inner orientation (to nature, that is). In her comparative study of over 150 societies (using a combined symbolic and ecological approach), Sanday noted that male dominance and female power are consequences of the way in which peoples come to terms with their historical and natural environments and develop their separate identities, that is, "whichever sex is thought to embody or to be in touch with the forces upon which people depend for their perceived needs is the sex accorded with power." (Sanday, 1981:11)

In societies with an inner orientation in which the forces of nature are sacralized, there is a reciprocal flow between the power of nature and the power inherent in women, in which the control and manipulation of these forces is left to women and to sacred natural symbols. (Sanday, 1981:5) Conversely, in male-dominated societies, the godhead is defined in exclusively masculine terms. (Sanday, 1981:6)

Sanday discovered a functional relationship between ecology and gender relations (7):

1. when the people perceive the environment as a partner rather than as an opponent, the sexes mingle -- in which case, gender relations are non-antagonistic and women have access to power;

2. when the environment is defined in hostile terms, the sexes tend to separate from each other -- a condition that gives rise to male dominance.

There is likewise a functional relationship between the decline in female power and the oppression of women on the one hand and, on the other, ecological factors such as depleting resources, cultural disruption, and migration. The impact of European colonialism on indigenous peoples is a clear example. (8)

Sanday writes,

When a people's identity is formed in adverse circumstances or when this identity is endangered by new circumstances, they may become heavily dependent on the aggressive acts of men. Male dominance results if adversity is blamed on matters having to do with women. Males may claim that supposed tyranny or incompetence of females actually forces men to dominate women. Or, the association of women with sin and evil gives men the right to dominate. The spectacle of the female temptress in the Garden of Eden is by no means unique. The reasons peoples give for their afflictions provide a starting point for investigating dominance-subordination relations between the sexes. (11)

Male dominance, thus, is historically constituted. It is not a universal feature of the human race. (12)

In her comparative study, Sanday also found a connection between religious thought and male and female power. The following remarks are particularly pertinent to our discussion of conceptions of gender in the cosmology of the CMD:

The relative power between the sexes will change as our culture changes. Change the cultural plot and sex roles are conceived differently. Change sex roles and the plot will change. For example, give women access to sacred roles and much else will change -- our concept of the sacred, the standard interpretation of the Bible, our concept of 'human rights' and so on. (Sanday, 1981:12)

The Philippine pre-colonial society was not patriarchal. It was the entry of Islam in the southern tip of the Philippines, followed by Spanish Catholicism imposed through colonialism, and later American capitalism that introduced patriarchy into Philippine culture.

Under the Spanish colonial regime, Spanish Catholicism became hegemonic in lowland Philippine society. This religious hegemony introduced two principles into Philippine culture:

1) The mother-son bond in which "mother" dominates the category of female is found in most Catholic cultures. (Ortner and Whitehead, 1981:23) This is an "indissoluble bond" in which the son's fate is bound to that of his mother, who is an idealized version of womanhood (Brandes, 1981:222), a cultural pattern not only found in Spain but also in the entire northern Mediterranean world since ancient Greece. (Slater, 1968:3-74) In religious symbolism, this is represented by the Virgin Mary and Jesus.

In this cultural pattern, "wives are seen (and used) largely as mothers, but compared to mothers they are felt to be defective in various ways; such a view has implications for the meaning and quality of the sexual relationship between husband and wife, as well as for many other aspects of male-female relations in these cultures." (Ortner and Whitehead, 1981:23) One possible implication is that since it is the son who occupies center stage, with his mother in the supporting role, man as represented by the son, therefore, has priority over woman. Furthermore, men's relationship to women will be ambiguous, both dependent (to the mother) as well as dominant (to the wife). In relation to the symbol of Eve, women who are not perceived as mothers will be considered threatening. (Brandes, 1981:222-224)

2) A related principle is the symbol of Eve as sinner and her identification with the Devil, a sexual ideology endemic and deeply rooted in Spanish culture. As Brandes observed, in San Blas (a rural town in Southeastern Spain in the vast region of

Andalusia), "women become transformed conceptually into the Devil through their symbolic metamorphosis into serpents." (Brandes, 1981:222) The symbol of the female as serpent and therefore as Devil is in stark contrast to the image of the pure Virgin. (Brandes, 1981:222) In Southern Europe's artistic tradition, the serpent in the Garden of Eden is always portrayed with a woman's face. (Rowland, 1973:144) Thus in the eyes of men, woman has a double-faced contradictory character: "it is women in their role as Devils who pose the greatest threat to family unity, just as it is women, in their role as mothers, who solidify the family bond." (Brandes, 1981:223) This results, as Brandes has noted, in male ambivalence towards women. (Brandes, 223)

Such a conception of the female, embedded in Spanish Catholic culture, became part of the dominant discourse of Spanish colonial culture in the Philippines.

This dominant discourse was appropriated and re-interpreted into the counter-discourse of the CMD's religious symbolism.

This re-interpretation was achieved in two ways:

- 1) Jesus is appropriated as Rizal.

Kinikilala namin si Rizal na talagang bayani ng ating lahi, siya ang Kristong Tagalog ng lahing kayumanggi. Si Kristo naman ay Kristo ng lahing puti. Tayo naman ay lahing kayumanggi. (Consuelo Mendoza, 1980)

[We venerate Rizal as the the true hero of our race. He is the Tagalog Christ of our brown race. Christ is the Christ of the white race. But we are of the brown race.]

- 2) Eve's identification with the Devil is nullified. Eve is transformed into a divine personage and is credited with the role of combatting the Devil.

Pagkatapos magkasala si Adan at si Eva sa paraiso at pagkatapos mapalabas si Adan at si Eva sa paraiso, hinarap ng Diyos si Satanas, angahas, at sinabi ng Diyos, 'Sapagkat ginawa mo ito ay sumpain ka sa lahat ng hayop at ganid sa parang, mula ngayon tiyan ang ilalakad mo at alabok ang iyong kakanin sa buong panahon ng iyong buhay. At pag-aalitin ko ikaw at ang babae at ang kanyang binhi at ang iyong binhi.' Mula pa sa una magkasala ang tao sa paraiso, itinipan din ng Diyos na makikipagbaka kay Satanas ay babae at binhi ng babae at hanggang sa kapanahunan ng mga propeta ay sinabi ng propeta Jeremias na 'hanggang kailan magpaparoo't parito ka ikaw na tumatalikod na anak

na babae? Sapagkat ang Diyos ay lumikha ng bagong bagay sa lupa na ang babae ay mananaig sa lalake." (Mamay, 1978)

[After Adam and Eve sinned in Paradise and after their expulsion, God confronted Satan, the serpent, and said, "Because you did this, you are accursed of all the creatures and animals in the fields. From now on you will walk on your belly and you shall eat dust in your entire life. I will pit you and your descendants against woman and her daughters." Thus, from the time the human being sinned in Paradise, God has ordained that woman and her daughters will combat Satan. By the time of the prophets, the prophet Jeremiah (31:22) said, "How long will you hesitate; oh faithless daughters? I have created something new on earth -- that woman will prevail over man."]

In this passage, the identification between Eve and the serpent is broken and instead man takes the place of the serpent -- woman will prevail over man (*babae ay mananaig sa lalake*), God has ordained that woman and her daughters will combat Satan and his descendants (*sadyang itinipan ng Diyos na babae at ang kanyang binhi ang makikibaka kay Satanas at ang kanyang binhi*).

To fully appreciate the significance of this symbolic transposition, we have to see how it contrasts with the way the San Blas culture made use of the myth of the Garden of Eve. The local rendition of the Holy Family's journey to Bethlehem goes:

"The pregnant Virgin, it is said, was seated on a mule, which was plodding along the road. A serpent suddenly appeared in front of the mule, scaring the beast so greatly that it tossed the Virgin onto the ground, nearly causing death to her unborn child. In those days, the serpent still had legs. But as punishment for endangering the Virgin and Child, God deprived it of its legs and forced it to crawl along the ground forever after. God also punished the mule -- referred to in the legend as a *mula*, the female of the species -- by making her permanently barren, the price for scaring easily and hurling the Virgin to the ground. (Brandes, 1981:222)

Brandes writes,

"The significance of this story becomes understandable only if we recognize that the two culprits, the serpent and the mule, both represent females. They endanger the lives of another female, the Virgin, and her male child." (1981:222)

In contrast, in the CMD, Eve is beatified (sacralized). The CMD altar is shaped in three semi-circles representing the three Eves [Eve of the Garden of Eden, the Virgin Mary, and Maria Bernarda Balitaan are the three Eves -- all coming from one Divine

Power (*iisang kapangyarihan buhat sa Diyos*): *Eva apdula, Eva sultum, and Eva Coeli* representing the three flowers (*tatlong bulaklak*), also the three stars in the Philippine flag which symbolize the three major islands in the Philippine archipelago -- Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao.

In accounting for their belief in the spiritual leadership of women, the priestesses of the CMD cite, among others, this prophecy, "*...magbabangon ang Haring babae sa Timugan -- isang lalong dakila kaysa Haring Solomon.*" [...a woman king will rise from the East -- one whose greatness exceeds that of Solomon. (San Mateo,12:42)]

One story that the CMD holds as a sacred mystery is the story of the apotheosis of Maria Bernarda Balitaan, their founder. The story tells of a 7-year old orphaned girl who ascended to a place beyond the seven planets where she met the *Suprema Hacedor* (Supreme Creator) who told her:

Mananaog kang muli sa lupa, kaluluwang tanging pinagpala, aking anak at doo'y itatayo mo ang kapangyarihan ng lahing tao sa paraiso na iginiba ng una kong hinirang na querubin. Sapagkat bagamat si Hesus at Maria ang ina-asahan ng libo-libong henerasyon na magtatayo, ay mayroong isang pagtubos at isang pagsakop na hindi nila nakuha at ikaw ang itinalaga ko na tatapos nito. (Consuelo Mendoza, 1980))

[You will return to earth, most blessed soul, my daughter, and there you will build the power of the human race that was destroyed by the cherubims I first appointed. Though Jesus and Mary were expected by thousands of generations to build the power, there was one redemption that they have not fulfilled. It is you that I have destined to accomplish this.]

The symbolic representation of gender in religion has social and cultural implications. Judith Hoch-Smith and Anita Spring (1978) write,

...in the year 1677 a papal decree forbids women to enter the Catholic priesthood because women do not resemble Christ (that is, they are not men). In any case, it will take more than women becoming celibate priests to free the 'feminine metaphor' and eliminate hierarchy based on sexual distinctions from theology.

A horizontal, or complementary model of social organization -- a situation that levels hierarchy -- depends on a basic restructuring of religious metaphor. ...it seems unlikely that women can share religious domains equally with men until discrimination based on sexual distinctions is eliminated entirely from scripture. The question

sometimes asked is 'Why cannot God be a woman?' but this misses the point. The real question is rather 'Why does the Infinite have finite or cultural attributes at all?' To conceive of God only in the feminine is to limit Divinity just as much as to conceive of God only in the masculine. And most importantly, to conceive of God in either gender will have significant social and cultural consequences for people of both sexes.
(20)

In the story of MBB's ascension to heaven, God addressed her as "most blessed soul, my daughter" (*kaluluwang tanging pinagpala, aking anak*). In that story, MBB's experience is reported by Consuelo Mendoza (drawing from the CMD oral tradition) thus:

Dumating siya sa tanging lagpos at doon niya nakita ang Dakilang Supremo. Pagdating doon, ang ipinagtataka niya ngayon ay kung bakit itong kanyang sarili ang nakikita niya sa katawan ng Diyos at ang katawan naman ng Diyos ay nakikita naman niya sa kanyang sarili, gaya ng nasa larawang iyon [pointing to the mural inside the chapel] maliwanag namang nakaguhit -- sa katawan ng Diyos nakikita niya ang kanyang katawan at sa kanyang sariling katawan ay nakikita niya ang katawan ng Diyos. Samakatuwid parang salamin." (1980)

[She reached the very ends of the universe and there she saw the Supreme Being. Whereupon, she wondered how it was that she was seeing her own image in the person of God and simultaneously seeing God's image in herself. Like in that picture, it is clearly illustrated in the body of God she saw her own body and in her own body she saw the body of God, as if in a mirror.]

In light of what Hoch-Smith and Spring said concerning images of the divine, the implications of this sacred oral scripture in the CMD are staggering. Not only is MBB addressed by God as "most blessed soul, my daughter," more importantly she is represented as having the same image as God and vice versa.

But what follows is even more striking for God commands her to come down on earth as man-woman incarnate -- neither as a man nor as a woman but as a man-woman incarnate. What are the political implications of this?

One mural inside the chapel (see picture) shows a series of pictures in descending order. At the topmost is the *Supremo Hacedor* (Supreme Creator), followed by Eve, then the Virgin Mary, followed by Jesus, then the *Espiritong mang-aaliw* (Spirit

that comforts], and occupying a larger space, almost at the center of the frame is the image of Bernarda subsuming that of Rizal.

The following conversation (1980) centers on this image of Bernarda and Rizal.

Q.: *Si Nanay ho iyan? Bakit ho doon magkatapat si Dr. Jose Rizal at si Nanay?*

[Is that mother? Why is it that her image subsumes that of Dr. Jose Rizal?]

A.: *Gawa ng si doktor at si Nanay ay magkaisa sa misteryo. Magkaisa iyan gawa ng may kantahin kami:*

[Because both the Doctor and Mother share in one mystery. As we sing in one of our hymns --]

*Birheng Maria Bernard, Inang Pilipina,
Dr. Jose Rizal, Pilipinong Ama,
Sa isang misteryo sila'y magkasama
At dito'y lumitaw, bansang Pilipinas.*

[Virgin Maria Bernarda, Filipina Mother,
Dr. Jose Rizal, Filipino Father,
Once in a mystery, they came together
And so emerged the Filipino nation.]

Q.: *Iyon hong sa katapusan na, sino ho ang magbabalik -- si Nanay o si Dr. Jose Rizal?*

[At the day of judgement who will return -- is it Mother or Dr. Jose Rizal?]

A.: *Ang Nanay. Ang Nanay gawa ng iyan mismong sa pagkakaposityoryo ng Tatlong Persona, mismong sinabi ng Diyos, 'At pagkaraang magkatawang tao aking anak, bait at karunungan na siyang Berbo' -- di samakatuwid si Kristo Hesus, di nakapagkatawang tao na siya at nasakop na niya ang sala ng tao. Pagkatapos ikang makapagkatawang tao ang aking anak -- 'ikaw Inocencia Simplicidad ay mananaog sa lupa, kasama mo ang Amor Divino, at sa katapusan ay magkakatawang tao ka sa isa na babae-lalake, at ikaw ang maghahawak ng testamento ng tipan ng Ciudad Mistica. Kasumpong ng sinasabi ni San Mateo, sa 12-42, '...at magbabangon sa paghuhukom ang haring babae.' Samakatuwid itinipang talaga ang babae dito sa katapusang henerasyon na siya ang magbabangon.*

[It will be Mother because that was what the Trinity agreed upon. As God said, 'You Inocencia Simplicidad will come down on earth, together with Amor Divino, and on judgement day, you will become man-woman incarnate and you will bear testimony to the Gospel of the Mystic City.'

This is foretold in St. Matthew, 12-42, which says, '...and on the day of judgement a woman shall rise.' Therefore, it is truly ordained that woman shall rule on judgement day.]

Q.: Masasabi ho ba ninyo sa katauhan ni Maria Bernarda, naroon na rin si Rizal at si Kristo?

[Would you say that the person of Maria Bernarda includes Rizal and Christ?]

A.: Hindi. Iba-ibang kapanahunan iyan eh.

[No. They belong to different times.]

Q.: Hindi ho, sa pagbabalik niya?

[What about in her second coming?]

A.: Ang Nanay lang mismo gawa ng natapos na ang panahon ni Kristo, natapos na ang panahon ni Rizal. Ngayon naman sa Nanay na. Pero iisa rin ang kapangyarihang nagpapa-andar -- buhat sa Diyos, iisang kapangyarihan, pabaytang-baytang nga lamang ang pagkakasugo.

[Only Mother will be coming -- because the time of Jesus is past, so is the time of Rizal. Now it is Mother's turn. But all of them come from only one Divine Source, from one Prime Mover -- one Power that manifests itself in different incarnations at different times.]

"God created something new on earth -- that woman will prevail over man." The meaning of this becomes clear when interpreted within the context of the inside/outside of structure and historical time dichotomy. Inside historical time, the time of Jesus and Rizal, the ordering principle is patriarchy -- man ruling over woman. That God created something new on earth means that something outside structure and historical time is introduced -- the reversal of this principle of segregation and inequality. On earth, this is something new, but when viewed *sub species eternitatis*, under the species of eternity, this is identical to *noon wala pang kasaysayan* (before creation, when there was no history) when there was wholeness. The prophecy contained in the story of MBB's ascension, therefore, foretells of the reversal of patriarchy on the day of judgement, when history draws to a close -- the patriarchal principle wherein man dominates over woman will be overturned by something new, namely, that woman will prevail over man. But the realization of this reversal, the fulfillment of the prophecy, involves a return to the primordial unity of God before creation, the unity of the Trinity, the Sagrada Familia, in which there is no split between man and woman. Hence, God bids MBB to come down on earth as man-woman,

signifying the reconstitution of this primordial unity.

The structure of time in the CMD cosmology may be summarized as follows:

<i>noong una</i> -	<i>ngayon</i> -	<i>kaganapan</i> -
before creation-	creation-	after creation-
outside of history-	in history-	outside history-
Tradition (past)-	present-	Future-
God's time:	Son's time:	Spirit's time:
Paradise	Paradise lost	Paradise regained
wholeness	disintegration	wholeness
power	loss of power	power
union with God	selfishness	reunion with God
love	enmity	reconciliation
abundance	deprivation	abundance

Thus the basic pattern is: unity - split - unity, or the past - present - and the return to the past. Because the past and the future are identical, the time structure is cyclical.

This pattern is repeated in historical time: Eve, with her commission of sin begins history, which is continued by Jesus, and ended by the ministry of MBB. Thus, Eve and MBB complete the story. Note that in the CMD's oral tradition, Eve's sinning is not stressed -- God does not chastise her, it is the serpent He condemns. Indeed, in the CMD story, God appoints Eve and her *binhi* (literally, seeds; thus the term means descendants who are of the same kind, that is, daughters) to combat evil, a commandment that is realized in the coming of MBB. But a deeper question may be posed: why did the serpent/Devil choose to tempt Eve instead of Adam? One can be tempted only when one is free to choose. To be tempted, it can be said, is to be presented with an option to act or not to act. Such an act is critical because it can make a

difference. Thus, the fact that Eve was chosen by the serpent is an acknowledgement by the Devil that Eve, rather than Adam, has the power to make a difference -- the power to choose between good and evil, and therefore, the power to destroy as well as to heal.

In the CMD myth, thus, female power is affirmed. Morality -- the freedom and power to make a difference, to choose between good and evil -- begins with Eve. More importantly, the freedom and the power to redeem one's Fall from grace is also entrusted to a woman in the figure of Maria Bernarda Balitaan. The cyclical pattern involved in this myth repeats the cyclical pattern in the equation of Tradition and Redemption, a mythical structure that affirms wholeness and unity.

The *samahan* concept of wholeness is symbolized in the *Sagrada Familia* (Holy Family) which is constituted by the Father and the Mother and the Son. Love did not pursue the meaning of the unifying principle of the *Sagrada Familia* and its relation to the meaning of time. An analysis of the CMD conception of time reveals the subtle meanings embedded in the notion of the *Sagrada Familia* and the identity of Tradition with Redemption.

The past/present/future schema of the *samahan* is elaborated in the CMD as follows:

The past (Father's time) and the future (time of the Spirit/Mother), in being identical, represent eternity and as such encompass the present, here interpreted to mean historical time. Historical time -- the time of the *Anak* (a Tagalog term that refers both to son and daughter -- is divided into two stages of struggle, namely the time of Jesus, that is, the time of men, and that of Maria Bernarda Balitaan, the time of women.

Thus if historical time represents the breakup of the *Sagrada Familia*, the identity of God's time and Spirit's time represent the wholeness of eternity, the wholeness of *Sagrada Familia*. This notion of wholeness can be applied to the family,

the people, the nation, or the world-community whenever the millennial folk wishes to make a moral point about the present state of affairs. In political terms, the Myth of the *Infinito Dios* or the unifying symbol of the *Sagrada Familia*, as well as the identification of Tradition (the past) with Redemption (the future) represents the millennial folk's longing for the recovery of the lost power and wholeness of an imagined ancient Filipino community before it was shattered by the havoc wreaked by colonialism and capitalism.

Of particular importance is the transposition of gender in the myth of Maria Bernarda Balitaan. When asked to explain their conception of the roles of men and women, the members (whether men or women) assert that "man is to the material, as woman is to the spiritual" (*ang lalake ay sa material, ang babae ay sa espirtual*). Such notions as "the material" and "the spiritual" should not be understood in terms of the usual meanings attached to them in the English language. For in the CMD usage, *material* is contrasted with *natural* which means *likas* or *taal* (indigenous). These latter terms are defined as *ang likha ng Diyos* (that which God creates), in contrast to *ang gawa ng Tao* (that which humans make). That which God created is regarded as sacred and as embodying God's power. It is in this sense that the word *espirtual* must be understood -- as that which is of God, and therefore, endowed with power.

Keeping these distinctions in mind, the statement, *babae ang mananaig sa lalake* (woman will prevail over man) therefore does not mean that women will lord it over men, in terms of a reversed gender inequality. It means that the sacred, that which is of God, that which embodies power and wholeness, should rule over whatever is the product of the acts of men in society and history. This means that the solution to patriarchy or gender inequality is not the reversal of this inequality -- for the basic problem precisely is inequality and the separation of men and women -- but rather the abolition of inequality and the negation of sexual separation. This involves the recovery of a lost unity and wholeness, as symbolized in the myth of MBB's incarnation

as man-woman, a bridging of separation, a reconstitution of wholeness that is symbolized in the notion of the Sacred Family (*Sagrada Familia*).

Thus in the myth of MBB, the transposition of gender in the religious symbolism should be understood as a critique of the present -- a deficient, degenerate condition in which the *material* has become dissociated from the *espiritual*, a dissociation of the body politic from the moral order, where equality and *kapatiran* (not gender marked as in brotherhood and sisterhood) reign.

Critical Issues: Feminist theory and the Anthropology of Women.

Atkinson (1982) notes that feminism and anthropology have taken well to each other probably because both share a critical tradition. Both head full-tilt at culture-bound assumptions in our thinking -- challenging pre-conceived notions about human nature and human institutions. Feminist anthropologists have continued this tradition by tackling hitherto unquestioned assumptions about sex and gender. (238)

The first to question the androcentric view in Western anthropology is of course Margaret Mead. (Ortner, 1980:25) Mead's influence inspired subsequent anthropologists to engage in more systematic studies of gender relations across cultures, but an innocuous tendency has developed in the process. Rosaldo (1980) observed that the search for "woman's place" or "woman's status" has turned out to be something like the pursuit of a ghost and that "an investigator who asks if women's status here or there ought to be reckoned high or low is probably conceptually misguided." (401)

Rosaldo writes,

To talk of women's status is to think about a social world in ultimately dichotomous terms, wherein 'woman' is universally opposed to 'man' in the same ways in all contexts. Thus, we tend repeatedly to contrast and stress presumably given differences between women and men, instead of asking how such differences are themselves created by gender relations. In doing so, we find ourselves the victims of a conceptual tradition that discovers 'essence' in the natural characteristics which distinguish us from men and then declares that women's present lot derives from what, 'in essence,' women are,

portraying social roles and rules as products not of action and relation in a truly human world, but of self-serving individuals who perform by rote. (1980:401)

Women, observes Rosaldo, are conceptualized as beings who presently *are*, and have at all times been, the same, not actors but mere subjects of male action and female biology. Thus attention is focused on such variables as domestic roles, maternity, and reproductive life. (1980:409)

This dichotomous, biologizing, or essentializing tendency is evident in a number of feminist writers as diverse as Gilligan (1982) who posits an essential difference in the psychology of men and women, or Griffin (1978) who sees "cosmic feminism" in the postulated analogy between women and nature, or Chodorow (1978) who defines womanhood to mothering and reproduction, all arguing that there is an essence to womanhood. The next step to this dichotomous view is to argue that women, by virtue of their womanhood are everywhere and at all times the victims of patriarchy, which then becomes the convenient scapegoat that explains everything that happens to women.

Rosaldo writes,

It now appears to me that woman's place in human social life is not in any direct sense a product of the things she does (or even less a function of what, biologically, she is) but of the meaning her activities acquire through concrete social interactions. And the significance women assign to the activities of their lives are things that we can only grasp through an analysis of the relationships that women forge, the social contexts they (along with men) create -- and within which they are defined. Gender in all human groups must, then, be understood in political and social terms, with reference not to biological constraints but instead to local and specific forms of social relationship and, in particular, of social inequality. (1980:400)

Thus, what we must try to understand is how men and women both participate in and help to reproduce the institutional forms that may oppress, liberate, join, or divide them. "What we must therefore look for are new ways of linking the particulars of women's lives, activities, and goals to inequalities wherever they exist." (Rosaldo, 1980:417)

Rosaldo's project is seconded by Atkinson (1982) who argues for the need to analyze the gender constructs through which people express themselves and to play those cultural formulations off against the structural and situational dimensions of women's and men's lives in a given society. (250)

After all, it was not women alone, but men and women -- MBB and Mamay in the case of the CMD and Agapito Ilustrisimo and the priestesses in the case of the TPSD -- who, together in their moral praxis, constructed the cosmology in which symbols for gender relations were transposed.

Following the lead of Atkinson and Rosaldo, I have realized that the gender constructions of the peasant millennial communities I have studied are understandable within the "moral praxis" (to use Scholte's term, 1985), or the "ideological practice" (to use Tanabe and Turton's concept, 1984) of an indigenous people -- whose language is not gender-marked, whose pre-colonial culture was not characterized by sexual domination of females by males, where the relationship between the sexes was not antagonistic (Reid, 1988) -- in their encounter with Spanish colonialism, an alien culture which introduced the sinfulness of Eve, the virginity of the Blessed Mother, and the notion that the Filipino was inherently wretched, especially if he was poor. Spain was followed of course by America which introduced the idea that the key to salvation lay in the accumulation of capital.

In that confrontation between an indigenous culture and an alien, patriarchal cosmology, the indigenes had to struggle to save themselves. In the process they had to make history, but as Marx put it, not under circumstances of their choice. Eventually, they developed a discourse of resistance by appropriating the very ideas that were used by the hegemonic state to subjugate them. In this counter discourse of the peasants, therefore, what we witness is the insurrection of subjugated knowledges, an insurrection of local knowledge that at least during the Spanish period, and before the Americans came, constituted a moral praxis of liberation.

The opposition between the time/space dimensions -- inside (*loob*) and outside (*labas*) -- in the millennial cosmology of the CMD (which may well be a "reference myth" for all peasant movements, whether religious, like the CMD, TPSD, *Cofradia de San Jose*, etc., or secular like the *Katipunan*, *Sakdal*, the *Hukbalahap*, etc.), corresponds to Victor Turner's notion of structure and anti-structure, where structure may refer to being inside society and history, and anti-structure as being outside of society and history, a condition characterized by communitas, in which asymmetrical relations of power, self-interest, individualism, competitiveness, antagonism, domination by one group or class or sex over another are nullified and replaced by an existential condition of solidarity, a community of brothers and sisters sharing an "economy of abundance." (a phrase used by Irigaray, 1985)

Similarly, the process of transcendence, the act of moving from inside to outside, which constitutes for the millennial folk an act of liberation, can very well correspond to Turner's liminality -- that process of moving from structure to anti-structure. Indeed, in Turner's conception, this act of transcendence is the function of rituals, a process that we can see enacted in the rites of flagellation and pilgrimage in Mt. Banahaw.

From our foregoing discussion of the CMD cosmology, I have come to the conclusion (albeit with some tentativeness, subject to more detailed inquiry as I hope my forthcoming field-work will accomplish) that the Banahaw mythico-religious complex constitutes a counter-hegemonic tradition which started as a form of resistance to the Spanish colonial regime. It was, thus, initially a peasant-based social movement that sought to transform Philippine colonial society, but then, after its brutal suppression and defeat, it became an alternative community (fragile as it is) within a social order that was perceived by its predominantly rural constituents as immoral and unjust. This thwarted social movement, however, could become an alternative community and sustain itself only by being outside of what Marx and

Durkheim call "civil society," a society characterized by domination. For the millennial folk, thus, "being outside" of structures of domination was realized both in a real physical sense and symbolically as a demarcated sacred, indeed mystical space -- the venerated New Jerusalem was at the same time a geographically isolated place of refuge. Through the backdrop of history, therefore, we witness the genesis of Mt. Banahaw as a millenarian sanctuary and pilgrimage center where a counter-discourse negates the power structure underlying mainstream Philippine culture and at the same time affirms the *Sagrada Familia* (Holy Family) as constituting the principle of a moral order in which men and women are not viewed as separate and antagonistic sexes but as both the genderless *Anak* (children) of the *Ama* (Father) and *Ina* (Mother). In the myth of the *Sagrada Familia*, the *Ama* and *Ina* are not merely equal, they are identical. Translating this myth in cultural terms, therefore, woman is either an *Ina* or an *Anak*, and man is either an *Ama* or an *Anak*. These three ideal types (to use Weber's term) constitute an indissoluble bond, a unity of three identical, as it were, personages, sharing and constituting one power -- a principle embodied in the myth of the *Sagrada Familia* as the Trinity.

Epilogue

The final question to ask, then, is -- Does this counter-discourse lead to the liberation of men and women? It is to Love's credit that he addressed this issue.

Love writes,

What they are seeking for was their own words, words with which to comprehend what was happening, words with which to take responsibility for what was happening to them. Whether or not these words will prove adequate -- and it is my opinion that they will not [underscoring mine] -- they are at least their words, not someone else's. Inevitably, I would think, when a people are allowed to embrace their own words for things, the result is action. And the consequences of this, again inevitably, will be considered threatening by the holders of state power. (1977:335-336)

I submit that these words proved potent against the Spanish regime -- witness the rising of the masses as one voice -- in the first anti-colonial revolution in Asia, a revolution in which the very ideas/words used by the colonial masters (such as those embodied in the Pasyon) were appropriated and transformed into a counter-hegemonic revolutionary idiom.

How did this symbolic transposition take place?

A possible explanation may be found in Peter Worsley's discussion of cargo cults in Melanesia. He writes: "Practically the only teaching the natives received about European life came from the missions, which emphasized the significance of religion in European society." (Worsley, 1959)

Indeed, the Western powers came to the colonies in Christian garb. Thus, if religion was instrumental in subjugating the people, then religion, in an inverted or modified form, i.e., indigenized or nativized, became a mode of response. A comparative study of millenarian cults in the Third World indicates that the masses assert their power over the colonizers by appropriating unto themselves the symbols of colonial power in an imaginatively religious, even creative, fashion.

Spain ruled her colonies through the Catholic Church: the cross and the sword were inseparable instruments in the colonizing effort. In the minds of the natives, the cross wielded greater power. In Melanesia, however, the missionary and the colonial administrator performed their "civilizing" tasks separately. The unloading of Western goods seemed to have been the major occupation of the state functionary. Considering that gift-exchange was a dominant motif in pre-European Melanesia, this business of unloading goods by the colonial authority became a symbol of power. Hence, the cargo cults.

In the Philippines, the stronger motif was animism -- the belief in spirits embodied in natural objects. There was also a pervasive belief in power as a manifestation of inner strength (*Kapangyarihang loob*). The passion of Christ and the miraculous

powers of the meek and the ascetic saints, therefore, became the symbols of power. Thus, the Christian theme of suffering as the source of power became the dominant idiom in the revolutionary struggle against Spain.

I share Love's misgivings, however. I have my doubts now if such a religious/revolutionary idiom can cope today with the Leviathan of American imperialism. Today, the revolutionary heroes and martyrs of the past are being pushed aside from their pedestals by a new cast of heroes, new symbols alien to peasant millennial consciousness.

Under the hegemony (to use Gramsci's term) of the Spanish Catholic theocracy, the culture heroes were modelled after the symbol of Christ and his Pasyon (the Via Crucis root paradigm). Today, under the American capitalist hegemony and the cult of Hollywood, new culture heroes have sprung, inspired by the ubiquitous presence of such mythical figures as Michael Jackson, Sylvester Stallone, and Madonna. Indeed, while during the Spanish regime the only cultural fare for the rural folk was the friar's sermon from the pulpit and the mournful singing of the Pasyon during Lent, today, a different sound is heard, not from the pulpit but from the electronic media, advertising the American Dream -- a sound that reverberates across the nation, reaching even the millenarian folk in Mt. Banahaw.

The last time I saw Mamay (in 1982), shortly before his death, he spoke to me of his forebodings -- the sacred bird that used to guide pilgrims in their mountain sojourns is no longer seen, its sacred voice no longer heard. Then, Mamay confided, *"Nakasira naman dito nang malaon na, napakaraming mga grupong nag-ahunan na dito. Nag-gawa ng kanikanilang mga puesto."* [What disturbed this place is that so many groups came up to settle here. They made their own shrines.]

Mamay, I think, was referring to those groups based in the lowlands who call themselves Rizalistas but whose real motives are dubious. I have met some of these groups. I can attest to the fact that many of these so-called Rizalista groups were pro-

Marcos. When these Rizalist groups gathered in Luneta to celebrate the birth anniversary of Dr. Jose Rizal on June 19, 1985, they were carrying placards that were evidently pro-Marcos. On the evening of the same day, they had a celebration at Puerto Real in Intramuros where they invited Imelda Marcos to grace the occasion and, when later prodded to sing a *kundiman*, Imelda gladly obliged. Imelda of course spoke glowingly of the achievements of the New Society and the greatness of Ferdinand. After her speech, all the members of the various Rizalista groups trooped to the stage to kiss her hand and sing praises to her. [I was a witness to all these incidents.]

I have visited some of these groups -- in Tanay, Rizal and in Naic, Cavite. I have found that in their daily religious rites, they have incorporated the *Bagong Lipunan* hymn that glorifies Marcos and his New Society.

On one occasion, while I was in Banahaw, I witnessed an attempt by Mrs. Baltazar, *Punong Ina* (head mother) of the Banal na Angkan Tatlong K (Holy Family 3 K's) to get the TPSD to affiliate with her group and change its name to KKK, the pitch being that this was the acronym of the revolutionary society of Bonifacio which spearheaded the revolution against Spain. This was firmly and decisively rejected by the TPSD, headed by Jose Ilustre (son of the founder Agapito Ilustrisimo) who delivered an impassioned speech upholding what he considered to be the tradition of the TPSD.

On another occasion, the CMD was invited to attend a meeting that was called, again by the Banal na Angkan, to form a national federation of Rizalista groups, a proposal that was also flatly rejected by the CMD.

Mrs. Baltazar was a staunch Marcos supporter. Save for the CMD and the TPSD, Mrs. Baltazar in fact succeeded in unifying the various Rizalista groups in the Philippines. Her efforts came at the heels of the efforts of the government -- through the then Philippine Center for Advanced Studies, which was known in academic circles at that time as being the Rand Corporation of the Marcos regime -- to send its senior researchers to Banahaw. One of them, Dr. Talisayon (a biophysicist) certified that the

date of the footprint venerated by the devotees as the footprint of Jesus Christ corresponded to the time of Jesus. Whatever came of these efforts we probably will never know. One thing I have noted is that sometime later the Rizalista groups I had been visiting started to incorporate the *Bagong Lipunan* hymn, a practice they did not do before.

Again, when I was in Banahaw, I saw Minister Hermenegildo Dumlao, a reserve officer in the Philippine army and a deputy minister in the Ministry of Education, visiting the CMD.

These events might cast some light on the strange behavior of the Rizalista groups in Mindanao. Early in the 1970s, a junior researcher in PCAS working under a research project of Dr. F. Landa Jocano, was doing research in Mindanao on the Rizalistas -- Caballeros de Rizal and the Benevolent Missionaries of the Philippines -- groups that originally were violently anti-government. By the late 1970s (Shoesmith reports in 1978), these Rizalista groups had turned pro-government and were being used by the military as *vigilantes* whose function was to assassinate suspected NPA cadres. The most violently anti-communist of these groups which has gained international notoriety currently is the *Tadtad*. (McAndrew and Valencia, 1987)

Another disturbing trend in Mt. Banahaw is the entry of rich patrons who claim to believe in the sacred mountain. One of these is a well-known TV producer and wife of a sugar baron who is also a Marcos crony -- Maria Montelibano. One day, a group called The Children of the Father, travelling all the way from the distant town of San Fernando, La Union went up to Mt Banahaw to install the Flag of Peace in the front yard of Montelibano's house. During this ceremony, the group's high ranking woman leader, Pines Lagera, speaking as a medium of the Holy Spirit, proclaimed Montelibano as *Maria Banahaw* (Lady of Banahaw). This investiture was publicly ratified by those present. One witness recounts, "That same afternoon, after the blessing of Montelibano's house by the CMD priestesses, many saw a circular rainbow in the sky --

a phenomenon that, according to old-timers in the area, rarely occurs." (Alaras, 1988b:228)

The precarious situation of the TPSD is also noted with alarm by a Jesuit priest who lived with them for over a year. Fr. Vicente Marasigan writes that in 1980 wealthy land-grabbers, in an attempt to evict TPSD members under the leadership of Benito Octoman from their farming lands in barrio *Huyon-uyon*, in the town of San Francisco, Quezon Province, sent goons to harass and intimidate them when threats and a legal suit did not work. In the ensuing violence perpetrated by the goons, Octoman's son and son-in-law were critically wounded. Octoman himself was arrested on a trumped-up charge of "illegal cockfighting." Prominent figures were involved: a millionaire from Zambales, a retired military officer, and an American owner of a ranch near *Huyon-uyon* who used his security guards against the hapless peasants. (Marasigan, 1985:11)

Lately, pressure has come from unexpected sources. Marasigan writes,

In April 1981, an American named Fred came to *Kinabuhayan* asking my help in gathering the people's signatures for organizing a federation 'for the care and preservation of the Sacred Mountain.' He left me a paper about this federation. I showed this paper to the *Samahan*, but its members refused to sign. I wrote Fred telling him I could not help him and he wrote back an angry letter accusing me of frailocracy and other perversions. (11)

On 25 June 1981, the *Times Journal* published a story about Mt. Banahaw and Fred's plans to establish an 'international center of psychic and spiritual research' there. On 28 October 1984, the tabloid *Tempo* published an article saying the Maharishi Age of Enlightenment Foundation would soon establish on Mt. Banahaw a base from which they would rule the world, in fulfillment of a prophecy of Jeanne Dixon made in 1965. (1985:11)

Should the TPSD succumb to all these pressures, Fr. Marasigan warns, "then we shall see the spiritual death of a beautiful people, gradually being robbed of their simple faith in the Tatlong Persona Solo Dios [Three Persons One God]." (Marasigan, 1985:5)

A number of external cultural pressures are now threatening the liminality of Mt. Banahaw as *communitas* center indicating a trend towards routinization and structure (which, according to Turner, inevitably follows every *communitas* episode,

can never be a permanent state). More disturbing than the entry of government agents that I mentioned earlier are recent developments: the *Santong Lugar* is becoming a tourist area. During my last visit, I saw busloads of Japanese tourists (I was even approached by a tourist agent to prepare a tour plan!). Some Manila businessmen are considering putting up a tourist resort and a cable car facility across the crater of the extinct volcano. To compound matters, there are plans by the Philippine government, with financial aid from the IMF-WB, to build a geothermal plant in Mt. Banahaw.

Even the nation's top academic institutions -- University of the Philippines and Ateneo de Manila -- are making the remoteness and isolation of Mt. Banahaw a thing of the past. Their anthropology departments have transformed the millenarian sanctuary into a field school for cultural anthropology (I must confess guilt on this matter) where a number of urban middle-class English-speaking students -- complete with cameras and tape recorders -- peep at the sacred rituals, transforming these heretofore ineffable mysteries into items of pedagogical curiosity.

How will these trends affect the mystic ambiance of Mt. Banahaw and the CMD's and TPSD's liminal preparations, as expressed through the rituals of pilgrimage and *suplina*, for the awaited Apocalypse?

During my last visit to Mt. Banahaw I could discern, not without sadness and nostalgia, a disturbing trend towards the demise of the symbols that invigorated protest movements during the heyday of millenarianism in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Looking back, I can now better appreciate Charles Leslie's comments:

Considering Turner's convincing analysis of the source of religious rites in universal human circumstance, the wonder is not that people continue to create symbolic ritual systems, but that the systems go stale or become perverted, and that people lose belief, often with anxiety but also with a sense of liberation. (1970:704)

Today, the membership of the TPSD and the CMD is not increasing at the rate experienced by other cults in previous generations. Could this be due to "the rise of

new vehicles of power for the peasants" (Azurin,1986:12) in which the symbols -- "the instigators of action" (Turner,1974:153; 1969:128-129) -- will spring from a different source, perhaps no longer sacred? Worsley writes: "Once people begin to develop secular political organizations ...the sects tend to lose their importance as vehicles of protest." (1959)

Unlike the pilgrim, the NPA cadre does not believe in the symbolic power of rocks, caves, and waterfalls; he knows from experience that, when the chips are down, "political power grows out of the barrel of a gun." So while the priestess flagellates to await the promised redemption, the woman cadre of the NPA cleans and loads her armalite for the coming fight. Which mode of action will truly liberate the peasants?

As I write the conclusion to this paper, a new peasant religious group is being formed (personal communication from Bing Sandoval, anthropologist from the University of the Philippines at Los Banos, Laguna). The story is worth recounting as it could throw light on how millennial groups are formed. It certainly throws light on the reality of Philippine society and politics today. When the poorest of the poor (as my colleague describes them) peasants and fishermen from Bae, Laguna received word of their impending eviction by the landlords, they formed themselves into a secular reformist peasant organization to resist their eviction and fight for their rights before the courts of the land. In their efforts, they were supported by some student activists from the U.P. Los Banos. In response to such militancy, the government declared the village a land reform area. This move benefitted the rich and middle peasants who thereby became amortizing owners. However, the condition of the landless farmers and poor fishermen did not improve, on the contrary, it became worse. Land reform only served to push the landless farmers and poor fishermen further to the fringes -- their communal and traditional ties to the middle and rich peasants were severed. The latter were transformed into small land-owners and the former became hired hands, peons of their own village mates.

Not long afterwards, these "poorest of the poor" farmhands and fishermen began holding secret religious meetings and started making pilgrimages to Mt. Banahaw. This newly-formed peasant *samahan* is led by the same peasant leader who organized the unsuccessful resistance and who by now has metamorphosed into a prophet-healer. Thus, the poorest of the poor peasants of Bae have now constituted themselves into a group that envisions a moral order outside the structure of Philippine society.

Meanwhile, inside the structures of power, Cory Aquino is proclaiming over television that her presidency is a "covenant with God."

And so the narrative continues, as one research paper is written to freeze the whispering voices in the mountain of truth, hoping thereby to extract the eternal verities out of peasant millennial dreams.

But then, are not such dreams -- when they are not frozen, when they lead to emancipatory action -- the very stuff by which history is forged?

Footnotes:

1. After writing my essay, I came upon a title of a chapter by Natalie Zemon Davis, "Woman on top: Symbolic sexual inversion and political disorder in early modern Europe" in The Reversible World: Symbolic Inversion in Art and Society. Ed. by Barbara Babcock. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978.
2. Sturtevant describes the *Lapiang Malaya* incident thus "LM's growing militancy eventually led to its challenge to the seat of power: during the December 1966 summit conference on Vietnam, approximately 1,000 bolo-equipped LM members assembled in Manila for the expressed purpose of interrupting the proceedings; six months later, early in May, the *supremo*, Valentin de los Santos, called for the resignation of President Ferdinand Marcos and the formation of a *Lapiang Malaya* government." Then, "on a Sunday morning in May 1967, leaders of the Philippine Republic faced an incongruous situation. A peasant uprising had erupted in the heart of the nation's largest urban complex. For more than a week tensions had been mounting in a strange confrontation between government representatives and spokesmen for a flamboyant religious movement called *Lapiang Malaya*. Around 1:00 a.m. on May 21, accumulated frustrations exploded into bloody conflict. Fighting broke out along a cordoned-off section of Taft Avenue in Pasay City near the Manila Corporation line. The anachronistic encounter, involving heavily armed Constabulary units and bolo-wielding sectarians, raged for more than an hour. When it was over, casualties proved to be extremely one-sided. One constable had been hacked to death, and five had been wounded. Thirty-three rebels, however, died during the course of the melee, and at least thirty-nine more suffered serious injuries." (1976:257)
3. See Four Readings on Philippine Values (4th ed., IPC papers No.2) ed. Frank Lynch and Alfonso de Guzman II (Quezon City: Institute of Philippine Culture, Ateneo de Manila University, 1973).
4. A good summary of Ricoeur's method and a discussion of its relevance for anthropology is presented in Mark Kline Taylor's "Symbolic Dimensions in Cultural Anthropology." Current Anthropology, 1985, vol. 26.
5. My understanding of the relevance of deconstruction to Marxism is based on Michael Ryan's book, Marxism and Deconstruction (Johns Hopkins University Press).
6. Michel Foucault writes of the "insurrection of subjugated knowledges" as referring to two things: one is the "historical contents that have been buried and disguised in a functionalist coherence or formal systematization;" the other is a "whole set of knowledges that have been disqualified as inadequate to their task or insufficiently elaborated: naive knowledges, located low down on the hierarchy, beneath the required level of cognition or scientificity." Power/Knowledge, Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977. (New York: Pantheon, 1980). pp. 81-82.
7. Brian Fegan has found a similar idiom among the peasants he has studied in Central Luzon. My analysis of the *loob/ labas* dichotomy owes much to my discussion with him. Also, Ben Kerkvliet told me that he has observed a similar idiom among the peasants of Nueva Ecija. To my knowledge, however, no one has published a hermeneutics of such peasant units of meaning.

8. The novels of Rizal have been translated into several languages. In English, the best translations to date are: Leon Maria Guerrero's translations (1968. New York: Norton): The Lost Eden (Noli Me Tangere), and The Subversive (El Filibusterismo); and Charles Derbyshire's translations (1912. Manila: Philippine Education Co.): The Social Cancer (Noli Me Tangere), and The Reign of Greed (El Filibusterismo).

9. My discussion of the CMD's conception of time is tentative (subject to a more systematic study when I do my field-work) as I am utilizing Love's study (1977) of the *Samahan's* binary contrasts of the time dimension (*panahon*) as a basis for my interpretation of the CMD's notions of *panahon ng lalake* (men's time) and *panahon ng babae* (women's time). My impression while visiting various peasant religious communities is that a common idiom exists throughout the Southern Tagalog region. Love's *Samahan* is a peasant community in Majayjay town which is situated at the base of Mt. Banahaw opposite that of Dolores town where the CMD resides. The *Samahan* too venerate Mt. Banahaw as sacred.

Love's analysis was inspired by Geertz's discussion on Schutz in the Introduction to Person, Time and Conduct in Bali and also that of Levi-Strauss on Sartre in the "Time Regained" chapter of the Savage Mind. (See Love, 1977: 291,fn.12)

10. On the "reference myth" see "Overture" to The Raw and the Cooked (New York: Harper and Row, 1969) p.73.

11. Several biographies of Rizal have been written, the best so far are: Leon Maria Guerrero, The First Filipino (1963. Manila: National Heroes Commission), and Austin Coates, Rizal, Philippine Nationalist and Martyr (1968. Oxford University Press).

Tape recorded texts: 1978-1986

(Aside from one sermon, the rest are recorded from what the *Banahaw* folk call ***pagpupulong*** which means "conversation," or "sharing of ideas" between friends. Thus, ***pagpupulong***, being dialogic, should be distinguished from the question-and-answer format of the "interview."

1. ***Mamay*** Amador Suarez: sermon delivered on the death anniversary of Dr. Jose Rizal, December 30, 1978; ***pagpupulong***, October, 1980.
2. ***Ate Gloria*** (***Mamay's*** daughter): October, 1980.
3. Consuelo Mendoza (Secretary and Bishop of CMD): May 25, 1980.
4. ***Suprema*** Isabel Suarez (Supreme Priestess, CMD): April, 6, 1986.

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